



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: HB1896, HD1, RELATING TO COMMUNITY SCHOOLS.

Purpose of Bill: Appropriates funds to the Department of Education to support community schools. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports the intent of HB 1896, H.D. 1, provided its passage does not adversely impact the priorities established in the Board of Education's approved budget.

The Department recognizes community schools as one of several effective strategies for fostering community and family engagement. Currently, these programs exist in approximately 22 Department schools. These models are established at the discretion of individual campuses, as school leaders are best positioned to identify the specific resources and partnerships necessary to support their unique student populations.

Community schools adopt a "whole child" approach, integrating high-quality educational opportunities with robust community partnerships. Successful implementation relies on the synergy between school staff, families, and local stakeholders. These relationships not only enrich the academic experience but also strengthen the surrounding community.

Should the Legislature be inclined to pass this measure, we respectfully request that it supplement, rather than displace, existing departmental priorities. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Education
Monday, March 23, 2026 at 1:11 p.m.

By

Nathan Murata, Dean
College of Education

and

Vassilis Syrmos, PhD
Interim Provost

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 1896 HD1 – RELATING TO COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

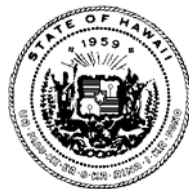
Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony offering comments on HB 1896 HD1, relating to community schools.

The College of Education recognizes community schools as a vital extension of the traditional school day. Community schools have the potential to strengthen support for students and families by enriching learning opportunities, extending classroom instruction, and fostering a coordinated, integrated system of services that addresses students' academic, social, and developmental needs.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 1896 HD1.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



RYAN I. YAMANE
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

March 22, 2026

TO: The Honorable Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 1896 HD1 – RELATING TO COMMUNITY SCHOOLS.**

Hearing: March 23, 2026, 1:11 p.m.
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of the measure, defers to the Department of Education, and provides comments. DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation not reduce or replace priorities identified in the executive budget.

DHS shares the same vision through school-based family resource centers, a component of community schools. Community schools build trusted relationships with students and families that improve student achievement, and well-resourced family resource centers have been shown to reduce reports of child abuse and neglect.

Family resource centers use a multigenerational, strengths-based, and family-centered approach. Families may access services in a place they are comfortable in that reflects and is responsive to the community's needs and interests. Services are generally offered at no or low cost and aim to build communities of peer support and increase social connections. Schools, families, and communities benefit from these models that support student learning, reduce chronic absenteeism, and strengthen communities.

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

To: House Committee on Education
Re: **HB 1896 HD1– Relating to Community Schools**
Hawai'i State Capitol room 229 & Via Videoconference
March 23, 2026, 1:11 PM

LATE

Dear Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Respected Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! (HCAN), I am providing testimony in **SUPPORT of HB 1896 HD1**, which appropriates funding to expand and strengthen community schools across Hawai'i. This investment represents a strategic approach to improving student outcomes, supporting families, and strengthening communities statewide.

Community schools integrate academics, health and social services, youth development, and family engagement into a single, coordinated framework. When schools are equipped to partner with families and community organizations, students are better positioned to attend regularly, engage meaningfully in learning, and thrive academically and socially. For many of Hawai'i's keiki, barriers to learning are not confined to the classroom. Housing instability, unmet health needs, food insecurity, and limited access to enrichment opportunities all influence educational outcomes. Community schools help address these barriers holistically so educators can focus on teaching and students can focus on learning.

Importantly, community school models strengthen family engagement and create trusted relationships between schools and the communities they serve. These partnerships are particularly critical in Hawai'i, where culturally responsive and place-based approaches are essential to meeting the diverse needs of students and families across islands and communities. Expanding community schools is an investment in educational equity and long-term student success.

This bill also represents a smart fiscal investment. Coordinated school-community partnerships reduce duplication of services, improve efficiency, and maximize the impact of existing public and private resources. By supporting dedicated coordination and infrastructure, the Legislature can help ensure that schools have the capacity to sustain partnerships that produce measurable outcomes.

HCAN believes that every child deserves access to a school environment that supports their full development. Community schools move Hawai'i closer to that vision by aligning education, health, and family supports in a way that reflects the realities facing students today.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please **PASS HB 1896 HD1**.

Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance
1776 University Avenue, WA1-102
Honolulu, HI 96822



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

March 23, 2026
Conference Room 229

RE: Support of HB1896, HD1

Dear Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance supports HB1896, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Education for community schools.

In Hawai'i, a community school is a place where school staff, families, students, and the community work together to help every child thrive.

Community schools are a proven, time-tested strategy that can bring forth short-term results like improving family engagement and attendance and decreasing behavioral referrals. It is also proven to show long-term results like closing the achievement gap, improving academic scores, and increasing graduation rates.

There are currently 22 community schools in Hawai'i across three islands that are mobilizing their community partners, families, students, and school staff to ensure that all students thrive in their school community. Each school has a Community School Coordinator who facilitates the co-creation of innovative strategies and is building a system of support to address the barriers students and families face.

Community schools create structured ways for families, students, and community partners to meaningfully engage alongside principals and educators. By bringing more voices to the table, community schools foster shared responsibility for student success. Educators, families, and community partners work together to address challenges such as chronic absenteeism, student well-being, and academic achievement. This collaborative approach reduces the burden on school staff by leveraging community-based resources and expertise to support the whole child.

Community schools also promote transparency and shared accountability through ongoing engagement and communication between schools and their communities. When families and community partners are actively involved, there is greater shared understanding, trust, and collective ownership of outcomes. This creates a model of accountability that is built through relationships and collaboration, not just compliance.

Schools should not be tackling these challenges alone. This is why community schools are needed more than ever, as Community School Coordinators can help to leverage the already existing assets and resources available within their school community to remove barriers to learning and accelerate equitable outcomes in health, education, and employment.

We urge you to support this bill that would ensure our current schools can continue to support their students and families and create the necessary support within the DOE to lead the state's community school efforts.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Masutani
Program Director
Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance
hawaiiafterschool@gmail.com
www.hawaiiafterschoolalliance.org



HOUSE BILL 1896, HD1, RELATING TO COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

MARCH 23, 2026 · EDU HEARING

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 1896, HD1, relating to community schools, which appropriates funds to the Department of Education to support community schools.

Policymakers should promote education programs that deliver wraparound care for students and deal with educational “inputs” that impact student success, like poverty and access to healthcare. An example of such a program is the community schools model of education, which as noted in Hawai'i's Consolidated State Plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act, is a research-based strategy for school improvement that emphasizes high-quality teaching, culturally relevant curricula, wraparound student supports, positive disciplinary practices and restorative justice, parent and community engagement, and inclusive school leadership.

In prioritizing student wellness, community schools have been shown to increase learning growth and graduation rates, while decreasing behavioral referrals and chronic absenteeism. In New York City, for example, community schools that highlight mental health counseling and consistent family outreach have seen chronic absenteeism rates fall by 7.8 percent as of 2017, with graduation rates rising 4.8 percent. Engaged learners are more like to acquire the skills necessary to become active citizens and productive members of the workforce. Additionally, since even the

most affluent and well-adjusted children face challenges in their maturation processes, guaranteeing that schools have the resources to respond to childhood pressures and trauma with compassion and sensitivity may make the difference between sending a student to college or losing them to social threats, like substance abuse or our state's prolific sex trade.

As the National Education Association states, "Community Schools transform traditional public schools into neighborhood hubs that mobilize students, staff, families and community members to reimagine education and co-construct a shared vision for their school and community. Community Schools are developed with the understanding that every community is different." Community schools rely on integrated student supports, expanded and enriched learning opportunities, active family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership to strengthen educational outcomes. Currently, 25 community schools exist in our state.

25 Community Schools in Hawai'i

O'ahu <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Barbers Point El• Blanche Pope El• Dole Middle• Hawai'i School for the Deaf and Blind• Kaimukī High• Ke'elikolani Middle• Nānākuli High & Inter• Olomana School• Wai'anae El• Wai'anae High• Waimānalo School	Hawai'i Island <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hōnaunau El• Ka'u High & Pahala El• Kealakehe El• Kealakehe Inter• Kohala El• Kohala High• Kohala Middle• Mountain View El• Na'alehu El• Pāhoa High & Inter• Waikōloa El• Waimea El	Moloka'i <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maunaloa El Lāna'i <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lāna'i High & El
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Contact: educationcaucusdph@gmail.com · 808-679-7454

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

March 2, 2026

RE: Support of HB 1896 HD1

Dear Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Committee,

I strongly support HB 1896 HD1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Education for community schools.

My name is Madeline McKinnon, and I serve as the Community School Specialist supporting Community School Coordinators (CSCs) across the state of Hawai‘i. In this role, I work alongside schools and communities on multiple islands to help build sustainable systems that center on student success, family engagement, and community partnership.

Community schools are one of the most evidence-based strategies we have to support the whole child. National research shows that well-implemented community schools are associated with improved attendance, stronger academic outcomes, increased family engagement, and reductions in chronic absenteeism. Importantly, these outcomes are achieved not through one-time programs but through coordinated systems that align resources, relationships, and supports around students and families.

In Hawai‘i, I have seen firsthand how this model transforms schools. At Wai‘anae Elementary School, community school efforts have led to deeply impactful outcomes for both students and educators. Through strong community partnerships, the school has been able to connect houseless students and their families to stable housing—addressing one of the most critical barriers to learning in the Wai‘anae community. This kind of coordinated support is only possible through the infrastructure that community schools provide.

At the same time, Wai‘anae Elementary has seen remarkable improvements in teacher retention. For two consecutive years, the school maintained a 100% teacher retention rate, a powerful shift in a context where retaining passionate teachers can be challenging. Educators consistently describe the campus as a safe, supportive, and loving environment—one where they feel connected not only to their colleagues, but to students, families, and the broader community. This is what happens when schools are not operating in isolation, but as part of a strong, interconnected system of care.

Community schools create structured and meaningful ways for community voice to be heard. They complement existing structures like School Community Councils by not only gathering

input, but helping turn that input into action. This ensures that solutions are co-designed by those closest to the challenges our schools face.

They also promote a model of shared responsibility for student success. Educators, families, and community partners work together, reducing the burden on individual school staff and creating more responsive, connected systems of support for students.

Additionally, community schools increase transparency through collaboration. Regular engagement between schools and families builds mutual trust, improves communication, and allows for real-time feedback. This fosters a culture of shared accountability—one built through relationships, not just compliance.

Finally, community schools provide local flexibility within DOE systems. Each school is able to respond to its unique context, strengths, and needs, while still aligning with statewide goals. This balance of structure and flexibility is critical for a diverse state like Hawai‘i.

Passing HB 1896 HD1 will ensure that this work can continue and expand. Without sustained funding, schools risk losing the very infrastructure—coordinators, partnerships, and systems—that make this model effective.

I urge you to support this bill to sustain and strengthen the community schools movement in Hawai‘i, and to continue investing in approaches that bring together schools, families, and communities in service of our keiki.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Madeline McKinnon

HB-1896-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 1:27:51 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lauren Peiler	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Senate Committee on Education

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair

Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

March 20th, 2026

RE: Support of HB 1896

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

My name is Lauren Peiler & I am the Community Schools Coordinator at Princess Ruth Ke’elikolani Middle School. I am writing in strong support of HB 1896, which appropriates funding to the Department of Education for community schools.

The Community Schools framework has had an inspiring & transformative impact on the students, families & staff at Princess Ruth Ke’elikolani Middle School. I’ve had the amazing opportunity to see firsthand how systems of support have been created to have a positive, lasting impact on our students & families. Our FREE resource support services would not have been possible without the teamwork, collaboration & trusting relationships of our community partners. Our students & families are receiving a higher level of care/support by having access to a food pantry, clothing closet, hygiene station, government support services, and Hawaii Keiki Nurse.

Community schools promote a model where educators, families, and community partners share responsibility for student outcomes. This ensures that solutions are co-designed by those closest to the challenge. When everyone is invested, schools are stronger, more connected, and more responsive.

I kindly ask that you please support HB 1896 as this will help our school communities continue to nourish & grow, as well as create thriving haumana in Hawaii.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to share my testimony with you.

Me ke aloha,

Lauren Peiler

LATE

HB-1896-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 9:11:22 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sheryll Famularcano	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

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

My name is Sheryll Famularcano, and I am a proud parent of two. I am writing in strong support of HB 1896.

As a parent, I want my children's school to be more than just a place for academics. I want it to be a place where they feel supported and where our family feels connected. Community schools make this possible by bringing together educators, families, and community partners to support the whole child.

In Hawai'i, this can look like schools serving as trusted hubs where families can access services such as counseling, health supports, and culturally grounded programs in one place. When schools are meaningfully connected to their communities, they are better able to understand and respond to the real needs of students and their 'ohana.

For families like mine, this approach builds trust, strengthens relationships, and ensures that our children have the support they need to succeed both in and out of the classroom.

I respectfully urge you to pass HB 1896 to strengthen our schools and better support Hawai'i's keiki and 'ohana.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

**Testimony of YMCA of Honolulu
In Support of HB1896, HD1 – Relating to Community Schools
Senate Committee on Education Hearing, March 23, 2026**

TO: Senate Committee on Education
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair

FROM: Kerri Van Duyne, Vice President of Development, YMCA of Honolulu

POSITION: Strong Support

Aloha Chair Kim and Members of the Committee,

The YMCA of Honolulu supports HB1896, HD1, which appropriates funding to the Department of Education to strengthen and sustain community schools across Hawai'i.

Community schools are a proven strategy that aligns school leadership, families, and community partners to support the whole child. This approach expands learning opportunities, strengthens family engagement, and builds integrated support systems that address barriers to attendance and academic success. Coordinated partnerships and shared leadership help leverage existing resources more effectively and create stronger outcomes for students and families.

Through our partnerships at Governor Sanford B. Dole Middle School, Kaimuki High School, and Princess Ruth Ke'elikōlani Middle School, the YMCA has seen how the community school model improves student engagement and strengthens connections between schools and their surrounding communities. When supports are aligned and relationships are built on trust, students are more connected to school, and families are more engaged in their child's education.

Investment in community school coordination is a strategic step toward improving attendance, fostering a culture of belonging, and supporting long-term student success statewide.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB1896, HD1.

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

March 22, 2026

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

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

The Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition strongly supports [HB 1891 HD1](#). 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 third grade. Screenings are the first line of defense in identifying students at risk for dyslexia and other developmental language disabilities. To be effective, these screenings should provide meaningful, skill-level information - not just a pass/fail score - to guide specific teacher interventions. 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. Furthermore, we would like to suggest an amendment to add parent notification within 30 days of a student flagged; involving families is critical to ensuring students receive holistic support in addressing learning gaps.

A key strength of HB 1891 HD1 is its focus on the lifecycle of a teacher's career. 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 ensures veteran teachers have 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. We remain dedicated to research-informed strategies that improve outcomes for all learners.

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

The Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition *E Holomua Kākou – Let Us Move Forward Together*

Members of the Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition.

- Kim Guieb
- Meilan Akaka Manfre
- Jennifer Dempsey, Ed.D.
- Sarah DeLuca
- Serena Marsden
- Christopher Padesky, Ph.D,
- Amy Ruhaak, Ph.D
- Petra Schatz, Ph.D.
- Leslie Stiller-West
- Jill Takasaki Canfield
- Germaine Tauati
- Danielle Todd
- Tiffany Yango-Au



david.miyashiro@hawaiikidscan.org
hawaiikidscan.org

David Miyashiro
Executive Director

March 23, 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 HB1896 HD1, which appropriates funds to the Department of Education to support community schools.

Founded in 2017, HawaiiKidsCAN is a local nonprofit organization committed to ensuring that Hawaii has an excellent and equitable education system that reflects the true voices of our communities and, in turn, has a transformational impact on our children and our state. We strongly believe that all students should have access to excellent educational opportunities, regardless of family income levels and circumstances.

Given the seismic shifts at the federal level, we must bolster local capacity to take care of ourselves. When we meet with teachers, they often say they don't know all the support options out there and they don't have the time to find the best options, and build and maintain relationships. A wealth of resources and partners are out there - but if we don't invest in coordinating that abundance, it becomes a burden on teachers - or worse, a gap for students to fall through.

Community schools offer a compelling solution, and the outcomes at these schools show students are better able to learn and access resources. As part of the Resilient Communities, Schools and Families (RCSF) Partnership we were proud to support the establishment of community schools at six Title I schools in Hawaii, and we directly saw the positive impact of this model.

Mahalo for your consideration,

David Miyashiro
Founding Executive Director
HawaiiKidsCAN

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 1896 HD1, Relating to Community Schools

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 1896 HD1 which would appropriate funds to support community schools.

Our organization recognizes the impacts that are possible when a school focuses on the development of the whole child. When a student's academic experience is tailored to support not only their academic performance, but also their health, well-being, cultural identity, and more, they thrive.

Community schools achieve these outcomes through a variety of school characteristics including strong family support as well as close relationships between the school, its students, their families, and the greater community. Working closely with their respective communities and community coordinators, these schools are able to effectively identify the critical needs of their student bodies.

This is a proven approach that consistently results in improved academic performance, increased family engagement, and higher graduation rates.

For these reasons, ECAS supports House Bill 1896 HD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

HB-1896-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 1:26:53 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Scott Nishimoto	Testifying for Ceeds of Peace	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Senate Committee on Education

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair

Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

March 20, 2026

RE: Support of HB 1896

Dear Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Committee,

I strongly support HB 1896 HD1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Education for community schools.

As someone deeply engaged in advancing community schools across Hawai‘i through my work with Ceeds of Peace, I have seen firsthand how this model transforms not only schools, but entire communities. Community schools create a hub where students, families, educators, and partners come together to address real needs — whether that’s academic support, access to health services, or strengthening family engagement.

In communities like Wai‘anae and Hawai‘i Island, I’ve witnessed how the presence of a dedicated community school coordinator can shift a school from operating in silos to becoming a coordinated network of support. When schools are able to align partners and resources intentionally, students show up more consistently, families feel more connected, and educators are better supported in meeting the diverse needs of their learners.

HB 1896 is critical because it sustains and scales this momentum. Without stable funding, schools risk losing the very infrastructure — especially coordination — that makes this work effective. Investing in community schools is not just about adding programs; it is about organizing what we already have in a smarter, more impactful way to ensure every child has the opportunity to succeed.

I urge you to support this bill that would sustain the community schools movement in Hawai‘i and organize our resources towards the success of learners, families, and communities.

Sincerely,
Scott Nishimoto, Executive Director of Ceeds of Peace



March 23, 2026

The Honorable Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
The Honorable Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Education
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: Hearing on Monday, March 23, 2026 at 1:11 p.m.,
Via VideoConference, Conference Room #229

Regarding HB No. 1896, HD1, "Relating to Community Schools"

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

We ask that you **strongly support HB1896** to appropriate funds to the Department of Education to support community schools.

Established in 1997, **Partners in Development Foundation** (PIDF) has substantial prior and present experience in the design, development, and implementation of programs for underserved peoples of all ages utilizing curriculum and approaches that incorporate the Native Hawaiian perspective, values, language, culture and traditions to more effectively reach those served. Throughout the past 29 years, PIDF has successfully managed and implemented over 214 private, State and Federal grants with an approximate value of over \$345.6million, serving over 75 communities across the state and over 176,550 children and family members with its free programs (5,621 people directly served in 2025 alone and an additional 4,411+ impacted through a range of community support services).

Partners in Development Foundation's Piha Me Ka Pono program partners with 8 Hawai'i DOE schools, providing Community School Coordinators to support the school's staff, students, families and surrounding community. From reducing chronic absenteeism through innovative methods like a walking school bus, to bringing opportunities like the national Amazing Shake Competition to middle schoolers, and sourcing basic necessities and food students of all ages to attend school ready to learn, the Community School Model has made schools a safe and welcoming environment that Hawai'i's youth are excited to be in. Community Schools bridge community partners to schools so that each student, faculty, and family has access to the resources they need to succeed.

It is vital that this critical work provided by not only Partners in Development Foundation but the many other nonprofit organizations in our state continue to be supported through sufficient resources to impact the children and communities of which we serve. **We ask that you support HB 1896, HD1 so that Hawai'i's community schools can continue building stronger, healthier communities.**

On behalf of Partners in Development Foundation and our many nonprofit partners serving tirelessly in our state, mahalo nui loa for your consideration of this request.

Shawn M. Kana'iaupuni, PhD
President and Chief Executive Officer



March 20, 2026

Senator Donna Kim, Chair & Members
Senate Committee on Education
State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

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Pacific American Foundation
111 Hekili Street Suit A 170
Kailua, Hawaii 96734

Phone: (808) 664-3027

www.thepaf.org

Re: Support of HB 1896 Relating to Community Schools

Dear Chair Kim and members of the Education Committee,

The Pacific American Foundation (PAF) wholeheartedly supports HB 1896 HD 1 that supports funding for the Hawaii Department of Education for the continued planning and implementation of community schools.

Hawai'i, more so than any other place in the country are prime opportunities for full-service community schools. Our communities are rich in cultural and natural resources, has the benefit of over 1,000 years of a Native Hawaiian Indigenous culture and has the best weather on the planet to embrace learning both outside and inside!

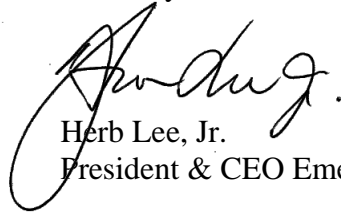
We have already begun to see models in Hawaii that are innovative, thriving hubs of learning in which partnerships and collaboration create a 'o aku, a 'o mai, reciprocal learning relationships between learners and place, content and context, and schools and communities. Through community schools, thriving learners, educators, families, 'āina, and communities are supported by nurturing networks that promote reciprocity. The community school's strategy transforms schools into creative and collaborative opportunities for partnerships that bring additional resources both monetary and non-monetary that can further incubate and connect Indigenous wisdom and contemporary knowledge to create and meet local and global opportunities.

Since 1995, PAF has been on a journey that started out as a community restoration project of an ancient Hawaiian fishpond known as Waikalua loko I'a in Kāne'ōhe Bay. It has worked tirelessly with communities and the Department of Education to implement various initiatives including community schools on the Windward side.

The coordination of relationships and resources are needed, now more than ever, to help students accelerate equitable outcomes in health, education and employment. These school-community partnerships also yield a strong social return on investment, with one study finding that every dollar invested in such schools produced at least a \$10.30 return in social value. Another study found that for each \$1 invested in the community school coordinator position returned approximately \$7.11 net benefits.

On behalf of the Pacific American Foundation and the communities that we have served in Hawaii, we urge you to support this bill and appropriate \$2,152,500.00 that would fund community schools over the next year. Community schools are needed more than ever as schools look to efficiently and effectively utilize resources to advance the well-being of children and their families now and for future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Herb Lee, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Herb Lee, Jr.
President & CEO Emeritus

TO: Senate Committee on Education

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair

Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

Hawaii State Capitol 415 S. Beretania St. Honolulu, HI 96813

BILL: HB 1896 – Relating to Community Schools

TESTIFIER: Michelle Barber

POSITION: SUPPORT AND COMMENTS

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

I am writing to you today as the Principal of Waikoloa Elementary and Middle School to express my strong support for HB 1896, which seeks to appropriate funds to the Department of Education for the implementation and sustainability of community schools in Hawaii, provided its passage does not adversely impact the priorities established in the Board of Education's approved budget.

At Waikoloa, we see firsthand that a student's success is inextricably linked to their health, well-being, and sense of belonging within their community and 'aina. HB 1896 recognizes that schools are more than just academic centers; they are hubs where staff, families, and community partners work in reciprocity to help every child thrive.

The community schools strategy outlined in this bill is vital for several reasons:

- **Integrated Support Systems:** It moves us away from fragmented services and toward a coordinated effort that leverages existing community resources toward shared goals.
 - At Waikoloa this has meant coordinating many efforts to increase student attendance and overall success including: Food Basket distribution for our families in need, School Based Health Center mobile unit so that students can get the medical care that they need while at school to break down transportation barriers, weekly visits to our low income housing sites with our Bilingual School Home Assistant to engage with families and build a bridge between home and school, and so much more.
 - On the other side of the spectrum, our community coordinator has been vital is our ability to put on an Amazing Shake competition where community partners work with us to improve students' professional skills like poise under pressure, the ability to think on their feet, be problem solvers and so much more. This has provided opportunities for some of our students to compete on the global level in Atlanta, GA. For some of them, it was their first trip outside the state of Hawaii.

This could not have been possible without the support and organization of our community coordinator.

- **Addressing Chronic Absenteeism:** By fostering stable relationships and meaningful family engagement, this approach creates the necessary conditions for learning and directly addresses the root causes of barriers to attendance. We began implementing the community school strategy three years ago and it has helped us to reduce our chronic absenteeism rate from 41% to 32%.
- **Proven Return on Investment:** Research cited in this bill shows that for every dollar invested in a community school coordinator, there is a return of approximately \$7.11 in net benefits. I personally visited the New Mexico school district to learn more about how to make this successful in Waikoloa and came back with many ideas which have helped our school to make improvements and allowed us to engage with 90% of our families last school year.
- **Collaborative Leadership:** This bill empowers families and students as co-designers of solutions, ensuring that our school culture is built on trust and shared power.

The appropriation of **\$2,152,500** for fiscal year 2026-2027 will provide the technical assistance, evaluation, and administrative support necessary to make this vision a reality across our islands. This investment will yield long-term dividends in the form of higher graduation rates, increased teacher retention, and improved academic achievement.

I respectfully urge your committee to pass HB 1896 to ensure our schools have the tools to support the "whole child" and strengthen the fabric of our communities.

Mahalo for your dedication to the keiki of Hawaii and the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,



Michelle Barber

Principal - Waikoloa Elementary and Middle School

March 22, 2026

RE: Support of HB 1896

To the Honorable Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my **strong support for HB 1896 HD1**, which seeks to appropriate essential funding to the Department of Education for the expansion and sustainability of community schools.

As an administrator at Princess Ruth Ke'elikolani Middle School in the heart of Honolulu, I witness daily the transformative power of the community school model. Our mission is to provide equitable access to learning experiences that uplift both our students and the broader community. Strategic investment in this initiative is not merely an expense; it is an investment in our state's future.

The community school framework establishes a foundation of shared accountability. By engaging families and community partners in consistent, solution-oriented dialogue, we move beyond traditional schooling into a holistic support system. This year alone, our community school team has aided in stabilizing numerous families by bridging the gap between classroom needs and essential resources. We know that when a student's basic needs and living conditions are stabilized, their academic trajectory shifts upward.

Furthermore, this model strengthens our internal school culture. By providing tiered levels of support, we can respond to crises with greater agility. This comprehensive approach also bolsters staff morale and pride knowing there is a robust system in place at our school to care for the "whole child."

I respectfully urge you to pass HB 1896 HD1. This bill is a vital step in organizing our collective resources toward the long-term success of Hawai'i's learners, families, and communities.

Mahalo for your time and for your support of our students.

Sincerely,
Nathan Davis
HICISL Intern Vice Principal
Princess Ruth Ke'elikōlani Middle School
1302 Queen Emma Street
Honolulu, HI 96813
(808) 587-4400

HB-1896-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 9:16:08 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Janette Snelling	Testifying for HIDOE	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am submitting testimony in support of HB 1896 Relating to Community Schools. My experience with the Community School as a wholistic strategy began over a decade ago as a high school principal. Currently, in my position as the Complex Area Superintendent, eight of my schools have made the same committment to embrace and redefine their school community within the Community School comprehensive model.

Community Schools provide powerful and effective strategies for schools that provide a strong foundation to impact academic and social emotional learning focusing on supports in key areas such as physical and mental health, tutorial systems, career readiness, expanded out of school activities,etc. School Coordinators work serve as an invaluable partner in realizing the vision and mission of the school and as a powerful conduit for family and community engagement. Importantly, the services are differentiated to the needs of the school and community.

HB 1896 would provide the funding consistency that is needed to sustain this valuable resource as long the funds are in addition to to HIDOE budget that has been already approved. Thank-you for your consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,

Janette Snelling

Complex Area Superintendent, HKKK

HB-1896-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 5:08:38 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Katy Jacoby	Testifying for Waikoloa School	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Senate Committee on Education

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair

Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

March 23, 2026

RE: Support of HB 1896

Dear Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Committee,

My name is Katy Jacoby, and I am a parent and PTSA President at Waikoloa Elementary & Middle School on Hawai‘i Island. I am writing in strong support of HB 1896 HD1.

At our school, we see the value of strong family and community connections every day. We host events such as Open House, We Are Waikoloa Fest, STEM Nights, and Literacy Nights that bring families onto campus and support student learning. We also partner with organizations like the Food Bank, HICHC School-Based Health Center, and the Waikoloa Dry Forest Initiative to support the well-being of our students and families.

Our PTSA helps foster a positive school culture through events like our Fun Run and Aloha Friday celebrations, which build connection and belonging for students.

However, much of this work relies on volunteers and limited staff capacity. A community school coordinator would help align these efforts, strengthen partnerships, and ensure consistent, sustainable support for all students and families.

This bill is important because many families face real barriers, and schools cannot meet these needs alone. Community schools provide a coordinated approach that helps students thrive.

I urge you to support this bill and invest in the success of Hawai‘i’s students, families, and communities.

Sincerely,

Katy Jacoby

PTSA President

Waikoloa Elementary & Middle School

LATE

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

March 22, 2026

RE: Support of HB 1896 Relating to Community Schools

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee,

Kaimuki Middle School's Kīpuka Garden Hui supports HB 1896, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Education for the planning and implementation of community schools.

A Kīpuka of Aloha 'Āina in Urban Honolulu Kaimuki Middle's Kīpuka Garden is a living example of how the community schools model can transform traditional academics into meaningful contributions to our community. The challenges in our community include:

- Low levels of student school engagement (as measured by DOE Panorama data)
- Counselors and teacher report increase in student misbehavior
- Degradation of Maunalua Bay, Waikiki, and Ala Wai marine ecosystems
- Climate-enhanced storms, flooding, sea-level rise, and erosion in shoreline areas

This bill works to establish DOE funding to hire a **community school coordinator** to align the efforts of the school with those of our community. We envision this to be a dedicated district, complex, or school-level staff member who could serve as a bridge between community partners (like Mālama Maunalua, Aloha Tree Alliance, KCC, etc.), businesses (Keep It Kaimuki, businesses, etc), and families, and organize learning opportunities towards shared community goals. School administrators and teachers are overextended and at capacity. A dedicated DOE coordinator could focus on relationship building with community partners and assist school administrators to organize school staff and bridge them to community partners. The Community School Coordinator also helps the community understand and navigate the DOE system, and leverage longstanding relationships with both the schools and community to more effectively and efficiently achieve community initiatives.

I believe in this model because it describes the type of work that has led to the success of the Kaimukī Voyager Center and Kīpuka Garden. Coordinators help facilitate listening sessions between the school and community to strategically identify and prioritize shared challenges. They build the "beloved community" (Aunty Puanani style!) by designing and hosting gatherings at the school. They mobilize resources (grants, donations, professionals, guest speakers) so teachers and students can engage in solving real-world challenges in their community. Currently, this work is done by teacher volunteers on top of their existing responsibilities. We wish to systemetize this so all schools could benefit from aligned and cohesive partnerships towards shared goals.

What we've accomplished through the Community Schools Approach Kaimuki Middle School is a living example of a budding community school movement within a traditional DOE

middle school. We brought the expertise of 38+ local practitioners to our school and wrote grants that funded the Kīpuka Garden, Voyager Center, Climate Conscious Inquiry, science fair investigations, and Learning Celebrations. We also used grant funds to coordinate school-wide professional development workshops in project-based learning and culinary safety, while purchasing supplies for teachers to implement new 'āina-based curriculum.

Here are some metrics that exemplify the meaningful experiences created by the community schools approach:

- **Core Mission and Leadership:** Rooted in Hawaiian culture and multicultural inclusion, the program fosters a sense of belonging for all students. Under the long-standing leadership of Principal Frank Fernandes, the program has expanded from serving 130 students to over 500, including significant participation from English Learner (EL) and Special Education (SPED) classes.
- **Facility and Learning Space Improvements:** The recent installation of a 20x20 shade tent has doubled the available shade for outdoor learning, significantly increasing the capacity for outdoor instruction and community gatherings.
- **Cultural Integration and Literacy:** Students engage in place-based learning through the Mo'olelo and Murals project, which integrates art and science to document the history of Kaimukī and Lē'ahi. Students also learn the Oli Kīpuka Kaimukī to stay rooted in the significant wahi pana (special places) of their community.
- **Environmental Impact and Sustainability:** KMS is currently in its fifth year as a NOAA Ocean Guardian School. The program has successfully diverted over 4,500 lbs of cafeteria waste through composting and processed 4,000 lbs of invasive limu from Maunalua Bay to support garden health.
- **Student-Led Initiatives:** The program hosts active after-school opportunities including the Aloha 'Āina Club (farm-to-table cooking), the Aloha Vibes Club (lei making and community gifting), and a Young Entrepreneurs Program where students develop and sell value-added garden products.
- **Community Engagement:** The garden serves as a hub for quarterly community workdays involving families, alumni, and local partners, with upcoming 2026 milestones including the construction of a dryland lo'i kalo and a community-wide Lei Celebration.

As the co-founder of Kaimuki Middle School's Voyager Center and Kīpuka Garden, I urge you to support this bill. It would allow more schools to adopt the community schools model and organize the resources in their community toward the success of learners, families, and communities. If you'd like to learn more about our program, we are happy to host site visits and provide student videos and evidence of the positive impacts of our community school efforts.

With gratitude,
Lianna Lam

EL Coordinator, Science Teacher, NCBT

[Kaimuki Middle Kīpuka Garden](#)

631 18th Avenue, Honolulu, Hawai'i, 96816

Email: lianna.lam@k12.hi.us

HB-1896-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 12:28:52 PM

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

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

Comments:

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

March 20, 2026

RE: Support of HB 1896

Dear Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Committee,

My name is Leilani Luiz, and I am the Community School Coordinator at Pāhoa High and Intermediate School. I am writing in strong support of HB 1896 HD1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Education for community schools.

In my role, I work closely with students, families, school staff, and community partners to strengthen the connection between education and overall well-being. Recently, I have been working with school administration to coordinate a financial aid event to ensure that all high school students have access to support as they plan for their futures. This is just one example of how community schools bring together resources and people to meet real, immediate needs.

From my experience, education and community well-being go hand in hand. Community schools create meaningful opportunities for families and community members to be involved, not just in conversation, but in action. This shared responsibility helps ease the burden on educators while building stronger, more responsive systems of support for students and their ‘ohana.

Community schools also allow us to respond to the unique needs of our campus. In Pāhoa, this flexibility is critical. Through partnerships and consistent engagement, we are able to build trust, increase transparency, and create solutions that are grounded in the lived experiences of our community.

However, this work requires sustained investment. The progress we are making is the result of intentional, on-the-ground efforts that depend on coordination, relationships, and resources. HB 1896 is essential to continue and expand this work so that more students and communities across Hawai‘i can benefit.

I urge you to support this bill to sustain the community schools movement in Hawai‘i and strengthen outcomes for students, families, and communities.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
Leilani Luiz
Community School Coordinator
Pāhoa High and Intermediate School

HB-1896-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 12:39:57 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
cheryl burghardt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee members,

I STRONGLY SUPPORT HB 1896 HD1. Our community schools are the heart of their community. I would add that with our current storm situation it is even more important to support these schools. In addition to their usual needs, I am sure that they will be looking at the need for even more resources.

Cheryl Burghardt

Nuuanu Oahu

HB-1896-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 1:53:35 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sarah Rice	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I write to you, in my personal capacity, in strong support **HB 1896**, which would appropriate critical funds to the Department of Education for community schools and a program manager position. The views expressed here are my own and do not reflect the position of any organization with which I may be affiliated. This bill represents an investment in our children's future, our families, and the fabric of our communities, as a means to foster an educational environment where every student has the opportunity to succeed.

Community schools are the heart of their neighborhoods, places where students, families, schools, and the broader community come together to build resilience and thrive. These schools offer a unique opportunity to create a system of support that extends beyond the classroom and into the homes and communities where students live. By adopting a community school strategy, we are providing a holistic approach to education that recognizes the full spectrum of factors influencing student success.

Community schools bring together local organizations, businesses, healthcare providers, and other community resources to ensure that all students have access to the support they need—whether it's after-school programs, mental health services, or access to necessary learning materials. These collaborations help break down silos and create an integrated network of support for children and their families.

The **engagement of families** in their children's education is another key pillar of community schools. When families are actively involved in their children's schooling, students perform better academically, have higher attendance rates, and develop a stronger sense of connection to their learning environment. Community schools provide the space and the structure for families to play an active role in shaping the educational experience of their children.

Student success is not simply measured by test scores, but by the development of social, emotional, and academic skills that prepare them for a lifetime of success. By focusing on place-based learning, community schools make education relevant and meaningful. Allowing students to learn in a way that is connected to their lived experiences, This localized approach encourages a deeper understanding of the world around them and empowers students to be active participants in their communities.

The **program manager position** is essential for the success of this initiative. Community schools are not a quick fix but require time, dedication, and continuous development to reach their full potential. A program manager can help coordinate resources, build the right partnerships, and ensure that the community school strategy is implemented with fidelity and sustainability.

HB 1896 is a crucial step toward creating a more equitable and supportive educational system. By investing in community schools and providing the necessary resources, we are laying the foundation for long-term student success and creating stronger, more resilient communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge you to **support** this important legislation.

Sincerely,
Sarah Rice

HB-1896-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 2:20:43 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joseph Passantino	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB 1896 and the continued investment in community schools across our state.

At Ke‘elikōlani Middle School, we have seen firsthand how transformative the community schools model can be, especially for at-risk students and families. Through this approach, our school has become more than just a place of learning. It has become a true hub of support for our entire community.

Our community partner has played an essential role in this success. She has significantly increased parent engagement, built meaningful relationships with families, and provides consistent, daily support to our students on campus. Her dedication, compassion, and tireless work ethic have made a lasting impact on our school culture.

She goes above and beyond to ensure our students have access to critical resources, including food, social services, and emotional support, resources many of our families would otherwise struggle to obtain. Because of her efforts, our students are better prepared to learn, feel supported, and know they are cared for.

HB 1896 is vital to sustaining and expanding this important work. Community schools are not just beneficial, they are truly game-changing for schools like ours.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to supporting students, families, and communities across Hawai‘i.

HB-1896-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 3:14:16 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Fay Pabo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Senate Committee on Education

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair

Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

March 23, 2026

RE: Support of HB 1896

Dear Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Committee,

I support HB 1896 HD1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Education for community schools.

I also currently intern in the Family Resource Center at Ke‘elikōlani Middle School, where I work closely with students and families. I am able to see how much our students are carrying, things we don’t always see in the classroom. At KMS, students come into the FRC not just for resources, but because they need a place to feel safe and supported. I remember one student who came in during lunch, didn’t want to go to the cafeteria, and quietly asked if we had any food. It was a small moment, but it stayed with me. It reminded me that for some students, school is also where they come for care, connection, and stability.

That’s why community schools matter so much. They create space for real community voice. This is where families and students aren’t just heard, but are part of shaping solutions. In the work I see at the FRC, it’s not just the school trying to do everything on its own. It’s families, community partners, and staff working together, sharing responsibility for student success. That kind of shared effort makes a real difference and helps ease the burden on educators who are already carrying so much.

Community schools also build trust through relationships. When there is consistent communication and collaboration, families better understand what’s happening at school, and schools are able to respond to real, everyday needs. It becomes less about top-down decisions

and more about working together in a way that is responsive to each community. Every school is different, and this model allows that flexibility while still being supported within the DOE system.

Here in Hawai'i, where we value 'ohana and taking care of one another, community schools reflect who we are. They allow accountability to grow through relationships, not just requirements, and create stronger, more connected communities.

I humbly ask that you support HB 1896 and continue to invest in the well-being and success of our keiki, families, and schools.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Fay Pabo

HB-1896-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 3:16:10 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaipo Correa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong Support for HB1896

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

Community Schools are not a theory—they are a proven, lived solution that I have experienced firsthand, both in the challenges of implementation and in the powerful impact they have on students, families, and entire communities.

I am writing in strong support of HB1896, which appropriates funds to the Department of Education to support Community Schools.

I recently served as a Community School Coordinator at Blanche Pope Elementary and Ke Kula Kaiapuni ‘o Waimānalo. Entering this role, both the school’s principal and I were new to the Community School strategy. The principal had not been part of the original decision to adopt this model, and as a result, there was limited understanding and, at times, limited willingness to learn and implement the approach. This created significant challenges, and my position often fell through the cracks as barriers and boundaries were placed in the way of fully realizing the work.

Despite these challenges, I remained committed to understanding the true purpose and potential of Community Schools. Through collaboration with fellow coordinators across Hawai‘i, I was able to learn from and witness the powerful impact of this model in action. I had the opportunity to see and take part in successful Community School efforts not only across our pae ‘āina, but also in places like Albuquerque and Minneapolis, where the strategy is more deeply rooted and supported.

From these experiences, I can confidently say that Community Schools work. I have seen how they build stronger relationships between schools and communities, connect families to vital resources, and create environments where students can truly thrive.

Appropriating funds to the Hawai‘i Department of Education to support Community Schools is essential. It will help build greater awareness, understanding, and alignment within our education system so that schools are better equipped to implement this strategy with fidelity and intention.

Community Schools began as a grassroots effort—a seed planted and carefully watered by communities. Over time, that seed has grown across our islands, taking root in ways that reflect

each unique place it serves. These schools have become living systems—kumu lā‘au—grounded in community, culture, and connection, creating opportunities, access to resources, and meaningful support for our keiki and families.

HB1896 is an opportunity to continue nurturing that growth. I respectfully urge you to pass this measure and invest in a model that uplifts and strengthens our communities from within.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify and for your continued commitment to the people of Hawai‘i.

Sincerely,

Kaipo Correa

TO: Senate Committee on Education

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair

Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

Hawaii State Capitol 415 S. Beretania St. Honolulu, HI 96813

BILL: HB 1896 – Relating to Community Schools

TESTIFIER: Tonya Duncan

POSITION: SUPPORT AND COMMENTS

TO: Chair Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee

FROM: Vice Principal, Waikoloa Elementary and Middle School

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

I am writing to you today as the Vice Principal of Waikoloa Elementary and Middle School to express my **firm support for HB 1896**. As a school administrator tasked with the daily oversight of student success and campus operations, I have seen firsthand that a community school strategy is not just a "program"—it is an essential infrastructure for learning.

When a student looks around and sees their community, their family, and their teachers moving in a single, unified circle of support, the light of their own potential shines brighter. That sense of belonging is the greatest predictor of academic success we have. Supporting **HB 1896** ensures that the path from the front door of their home to the front door of our school is paved with the resources they need to thrive.

The Impact at Waikoloa: A Vice Principal’s Perspective From my position on the leadership team, I have seen the "Community School" strategy transform our campus in tangible ways:

- **Coordinated Support, Not Fragmented Fixes:** My role involves identifying barriers to learning. Because of this model, we don’t just identify a problem; we have a system to solve it. This includes our **School-Based Health Center mobile unit**, which provides medical care on-site, and our **Food Basket distributions** that ensure our students aren't sitting in class hungry.
- **A Dramatic Shift in Attendance:** Chronic absenteeism is one of the toughest challenges we face. By deploying our **Bilingual School Home Assistant** to our low-income housing sites, we have built a bridge of trust with our families. In just three years, we have successfully moved our chronic absenteeism rate from **41% down to 32%**.

- **Global Opportunities through Local Coordination:** One of my proudest moments was watching our students participate in the **Amazing Shake competition**. Our community coordinator's ability to engage local professionals led to our keiki competing in Atlanta, GA. For several of these students, it was their first time leaving the islands—an experience that changed their life trajectory.
- **The Power of a Coordinator:** As an administrator, I can attest that the **\$7.11 return on every \$1 invested** in a coordinator is a conservative estimate of their value. Last year, this role allowed us to engage with **90% of our families**, a level of involvement that would be impossible for the principal and me to manage alone.

The proposed appropriation of **\$2,152,500** for FY 2026-2027 is a vital investment. It ensures that administrators like myself have the technical and administrative support to focus on the "whole child," leading to better teacher retention and higher achievement.

I respectfully urge your committee to pass **HB 1896**. Thank you for your commitment to the keiki of Hawaii and for the opportunity to testify on behalf of our school community.

Respectfully,

Tonya Duncan

Vice Principal, Waikoloa Elementary and Middle School

HB-1896-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 4:13:09 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
susan seumalo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Mercado, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education:

My name is Susan Omi Seumalo, and I submit this testimony in strong support of HB 1896. I write as both a parent and a Community School Coordinator with Parent in Development Foundation, and I respectfully urge your support for sustainable funding for community schools.

Community School Coordinators are the glue that connects schools, families, and communities. Because we are rooted in the communities we serve, we are able to build trusting relationships with parents, engage families more effectively, and respond to real needs. Our partnerships with local businesses, service providers, and community organizations make it easier to increase parent and community involvement and bring vital resources directly to school campuses.

From a parent perspective, community schools remove barriers that often prevent families from fully engaging in their children’s education. This holistic approach supports student success, family stability, and overall community well-being.

HB 1896 is critical to sustaining this work. Without reliable funding, the relationships and partnerships that take years to build are at risk. Investing in community schools is an investment in equity and the long-term success of our keiki.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I respectfully urge you to support HB 1896.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Omi Seumalo

HB-1896-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 5:16:00 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Beth D King	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Representative,

Please support the needs of Hawaii Deaf Community. They have to wait so long to have the same basic needs met from mainland deaf. We need funding for Hawaii School for the Deaf, ASL interpreters. I work with families raising deaf keiki and they need quality ASL interpreters for doctors appointment, dentist, schools, after school programs and more. Thank you in advance for all you can do to pass this bill!

Aloha,

Dr Beth King

Ceeds of Peace HSDB

HB-1896-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 5:19:17 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Debra Shiraishi Pratt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support Communities in Schools. It is a well established known that students learn via different modalities. Schools that are enriched by community resources have a better chance of creating safe learning environments and activities to support the academic lessons. Students, families and communities will thrive when there is a porous wall that supports enriched learning opportunities, parent engagement and community involvement. Simply put, it makes good sense.

HB-1896-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 7:11:11 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ernestine L Belaski-Epstein	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

March 23, 2026

RE: Support of HB 1896

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 1896 HD1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Education for Community Schools.

During the 2024–2025 school year, Community Schools in partnership with Waianae Elementary School were able to support more than 600 students and families by providing essential resources ranging from hygiene items to school supplies. In addition, we were able to assist four families experiencing houselessness in securing shelter.

Throughout the school year, students and staff regularly access our Community Schools resources to obtain basic necessities that support student success both in and out of the classroom. To improve accessibility, a WES Community email was also created, allowing families and staff to easily connect with our Community Schools team for support.

Recently, we were made aware of a student who had been missing school due to becoming houseless. Our team was able to respond quickly, providing the student and her family with tents, tarps, food, hygiene supplies, blankets, and clothing—many of which were critical given the severe weather conditions our community has recently experienced.

We have also supported our haumāna in participating in ‘āina-based huaka‘i by providing covered-toe shoes, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to engage in these meaningful cultural and educational experiences.

Community Schools play a vital role in addressing the holistic needs of students and families, removing barriers to education, and strengthening our communities. Continued funding through

HB 1896 will allow us to sustain and expand these essential services for those who need them most.

I urge you to support this bill to continue building strong, resilient Community Schools across Hawai'i and to ensure the success of our learners, families, and communities.

Sincerely,
Ernestine Belaski-Epstein

Community School Coordinator

Wai'anae Elementary School

808-308-1459

HB-1896-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 7:16:17 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shana Wailana Kukila	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Senate Committee on Education

RE: HB1896 Relating to Community Schools

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

My testimony is in full support of HB1896, which seeks to "appropriate funds to the department of education to support the implementation, coordination, and sustainability of community schools in Hawaii."

My strong support is the result of my introduction to a Community School Coordinator in Kealakehe School on the Big Island. She is one of the most humble, hardworking, and caring support staff I have ever witnessed in my educational career. Many of the students benefit from being a Community School, from after school activities, emotional and material supports in the form of extra clothes and slippers for students in need to visiting student homes to help parents get them to school. They have also started initiatives like a school garden to teach students about sustainability and mālama 'āina. They often work under the radar, with few even knowing their school is a "Community School." A quiet support system that students in need know well and benefit from on every school day. These are the pu'uhonua, the safe spaces of our community staffed with compassionate, dedicated educators.

However, the cost of some of these supports often comes out of the pockets of the Community Schools staff, and that should never be. Like many DOE teachers, they do it out of their heart when the funds are low, and they would continue to do so if they had to.

This bill is a good way to take that burden off these educators and fund a whole-child education for our most vulnerable students. Increased funding would empower the Community School staff to better serve their students, particularly in rural areas with transportation and other challenges these families must face. The return on investment in a quality, holistic education through support for Community Schools is one that will pay dividends down the line in terms of productive, stable graduates ready to join the workforce. Lower rates of child welfare cases and juvenile delinquency is another positive outcome for investing in Community Schools. Prevention is the key to better results.

To date, there are only about 22 Community Schools in Hawai'i, but they all should be. This bill could be amended to do just that. It would be a wise investment of our time and money.

One way to build a strong economy and society is to invest in education, and one important way to invest in education is to support students in all aspects of their life so that there are little to no barriers to achieving an education. In Hawai'i, we call that mālama nā keiki. Care for children well: like the kalo, when well cared for, they will grow up healthy and vibrant.

In conclusion, the benefits of a Community School far outweigh the costs. We, the Taxpayers of Hawai'i want our tax dollars to fund this kind of educational support in our schools because we know it leads to greater success and a vibrant society of healthy citizens.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Shana Kukila

Hilo, HI

Here is more information from their website:

community-schools.html

Full-Service Community Schools in Hawai'i

A community school is a place where school staff, families, students, and the community work together to help every child thrive.

They support the whole child—addressing academics, health, well-being, belonging, cultural identity, and connection to 'āina.

Students and families are not just supported, they are partners and leaders. These relationships are built on reciprocity —helping share ideas, lead projects, and create solutions together.

Each community school reflects and is a part of its unique community. Addressing the needs, values, and strengths of its people through the empowerment of the community. In Hawai'i, community schools reflect who we are, how we live, and what we aspire to become.

Impact Goals

Community schools in Hawai'i are here to ensure students, families, and communities thrive. Here are the goals we are working toward:

1. Support the Whole Child and Whole Family

Support students to succeed academically, emotionally, socially, and culturally. Ensure students and families have access to health care, food, mental health, and anything they need to overcome barriers to success.

2. Build Strong Relationships and Partnerships

Bring together schools, families, community members, and organizations to work as a team. We are stronger when we work together!

3. Connect Learning to Place and Culture

Weave Indigenous wisdom, 'āina-based learning, and 21st-century and real-world skills to prepare them for the future.

4. Measure and Improve

Use data and community voice to track progress and make things better over time.

###

HB-1896-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 7:32:23 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Iolani Kuoha	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Letter of Support: HB1896 HD1

To: The Honorable Michelle N. Kidani, Chair; The Honorable Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair; and Members of the Senate Committee on Education / Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: ‘Iolani Kū‘oha

Date: March 21, 2026

Subject: STRONGLY SUPPORT HB1896 HD1, Relating to Community Schools

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and members of the Committees,

I am writing to express my **strong support for HB1896 HD1**, which seeks to appropriate funds for the implementation, coordination, and sustainability of community schools within the Department of Education.

Community schools represent a proven, research-backed strategy for addressing the root causes of barriers to learning. By transforming schools into community hubs that offer integrated student supports, expanded learning opportunities, and active family engagement, we can ensure that every student in Hawaii has the tools they need to thrive.

Key Reasons for Support:

- **Proven Return on Investment:** National research, including studies from New Mexico and New York, demonstrates that every dollar invested in community school coordination can yield a return of over \$7.00 in net benefits through improved graduation rates and student outcomes.
- **Addressing Chronic Absenteeism:** HB1896 HD1 specifically identifies the community school model as a vital tool for reducing chronic absenteeism by fostering a sense of belonging and providing stable, coordinated support systems.
- **Holistic Support:** This bill supports the "whole child" by bridging the gap between academic instruction and essential health and well-being services, ensuring that resources are leveraged efficiently rather than operating in isolation.

- **Empowering Local Communities:** The model relies on "pilina" (trusting relationships) and inclusive decision-making, recognizing families and students as co-designers of their own educational success.

The appropriation requested in this bill is a necessary investment in the future of Hawaii's youth and the long-term health of our communities. I respectfully urge the committees to pass HB1896 HD1.

Mahalo for your time and for your dedication to Hawaii's students.

Sincerely,

‘Iolani Kū‘oha

email: kuohaiolani1@gmail.com

mobile: (808)298-9686

HB-1896-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 2:22:12 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hannah Loyola	Testifying for Hawaii Department of Education	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In my experience as the principal of a Community School, I have seen how the Community Schools program has worked as a valuable equity strategy. Having the support of a Community School Coordinator to engage our families and community in the work of school improvement has allowed us to offer greater support and enrichment to our students and families.

Thank you for considering my comments.

HB-1896-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 8:04:41 PM

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

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

Comments:

Senate Committee on Education

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair

Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

March 21, 2026

RE: Support of HB 1896

Dear Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Committee,

I, Donna Okita support HB 1896 HD1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Education for community schools.

As a retired DOE Teacher and currently the Community Schools Coordinator at Olomana School for the past 2 years, I have helped the administrators, teachers, students, and families with various resources to help them in the classroom, home or community.

My position has made a positive impact for our school especially for the students and teachers. I have helped with coordinating field trips, guest speakers, school wide activities, internships, and a school bus pilot program to increase student attendance. Many of the things that I have implemented at the school, may not have been accomplished if we did not have the community schools position.

As a Community School Coordinator we work with the schools Assets and Needs Assessment and we try to do things that the staff do not have time to do, especially when they are focused on teaching. However for many community schools, who are out of CSI or MRI status no longer have a Community School Coordinator position due to funding and when the school does not have anyone to continue the programs, the students,

teachers and parents are the one that loose out from the resources that have been provided for the last 2 - 3 years.

This is why we need the support from the legislature to help fund community schools in Hawai'i, so please consider funding more money so that community schools can continue in Hawai'i even if a school comes out of CSI/MRI status.

I urge you to please support this bill that would sustain the community schools movement in Hawai'i and organize our resources towards the success of learners, families, and communities.

Sincerely,

Donna Okita

Olomana School

Community School Coordinator

HB-1896-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 10:19:20 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sara Cook	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Sara Cook, and I am a parent and community member in Waikoloa Village. I am writing to express my strong support for HB 1896 and the investment in community schools.

Community schools are especially important in rural communities like Waikoloa, where access to resources and services can be limited. The community school model helps bridge that gap by connecting students and families with essential supports while strengthening relationships between schools and the broader community.

At Waikoloa School, we have seen the positive impact of this approach. Our school has achieved strong family engagement, with approximately 89% participation last year, reflecting meaningful connections between families and the school. In addition, partnerships with organizations such as The Food Basket and Hawai'i Island Community Health Center have provided critical services, including access to food and school-based healthcare, directly supporting student well-being and readiness to learn.

The emphasis on collaborative leadership through groups like the PTSA and School Community Council also helps ensure that families and community members have a voice in shaping the school. While there is always room to grow, these efforts are making a real difference in building a more connected and supportive school environment.

For rural communities, community schools are not just beneficial—they are essential. They help address barriers related to healthcare access and economic challenges while creating a coordinated system of support for students and families.

Passing HB 1896 will allow schools like ours to continue and expand this important work so that all students, regardless of where they live, have access to the resources and opportunities they need to succeed.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your leadership in fostering systems that work together in service of Hawai'i's public education mission.

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

March 21, 2026

RE: Support of HB 1896

Dear Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Committee,

I, Trish Papalimu, support HB 1896 HD1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Education for community schools.

Let's talk about the now... devastation after this recent Kona Low storm. Communities are underwater and in my community situation, schools that suffered damage will be closed and students will transition to online learning for the duration of campus repairs. At the crack of dawn and into the darkness of night my phone has been ringing and receiving messages. Because of the bridges we build as Community School Coordinators, in times like these, agencies that play crucial roles in helping to support the community in times of need reach out to us personally to ask for our assistance in leading community support initiatives.

On Wednesday, in partnership with Vibrant Hawai'i, I will be leading a food distribution for 300+ Konawaena High School 'ohana in our community to support priority students that will face food hardships due to not being on school campus to receive a breakfast and a lunch. Konawaena Highschool is not listed as a "community school" but is definitely a school that WILL be supported by one (Hōnaunau Elementary) because that's just what we do.

In less than 2 days we secured food for our students because of the deep connections built with agencies/organizations in and out of our community. The volunteers I will have are admin & staff from surrounding South Kona schools like Hōnaunau Elementary Konawaena Complex, Ho'okena Elementary, 'Ehunuikaimalino, Kūpa'a Academy Homeschool, and Kona Pacific Charter School, and our State Representative, Jeanné Kapela. This type of work continues because community organizations remember us and we always say yes, even if it means figuring it out along the way.

That is CommUNITY... showing up for one another in ALL the ways we know how.

I, Trish Papalimu, urge you to support this bill that would sustain the community schools movement in Hawai'i and organize our resources towards the success of learners, families, and communities.

Sincerely,
Trish Papalimu

Community Schools Coordinator (Ceeds of Peace)
Family Resource Center Director (Hawaii Ohana Support Network)
Hōnaunau Elementary School, South Kona

HB-1896-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 1:05:31 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Angela Hoppe Cruz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Angela Hoppe-Cruz a community member of the Nanakuli Wai'anae Coast whose children benefit from public school education. I am writing in support of HB1896 for the innovation and intentional collaboration bridging school to community. The following points underscore its importance to the success of our student community and strengthen family and community engagement.

1. Community Voice

- Community schools create structured, meaningful ways for families and community members to be heard.
- They complement existing structures like School Community Councils by helping turn community input into action.
- This ensures that solutions are co-designed by those closest to the challenge.

2. Shared Responsibility for Student Success

- Community schools promote a model where educators, families, and community partners share responsibility for student outcomes.
- This reduces the burden on principals and teachers by bringing in additional support and resources.
- When everyone is invested, schools are stronger, more connected, and more responsive.

3. Increased Transparency Through Collaboration

- Community schools foster open communication and regular engagement between schools and the community.
- Families better understand what's happening at school, and schools gain real-time feedback from the community.
- This creates a culture of mutual trust and transparency, rather than top-down accountability alone.

4. Local Flexibility Within DOE Systems

- Community schools allow each campus to respond to its unique needs and strengths.
- Schools gain tools and partnerships from their community to better serve their community.

5. Accountability Through Relationships, Not Just Compliance

- Community schools build shared accountability by engaging families and partners in ongoing dialogue and problem-solving.
- Instead of accountability being something done to schools, it becomes something built with the community.

This leads to more sustainable, trust-based improvement. As a parent I have seen the impact collaboration between lead agency community schools programs can have! It gives me hope. Additionally, in areas that experience high turnover rates, the community school approach uses the greatest resource available -community and parents to collaborate and bridge sustainable and trusting relationships.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Angela Hoppe-Cruz

LATE

HB-1896-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 9:50:49 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelly Anne Beppu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

March 23, 2026

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

My name is Kelly Anne Beppu, a community member, licensed social worker and seasoned Youth Development professional. **I am in strong support of HB 1896** and urge you to also support HB 1896.

As the saying goes, "it takes a village to raise a child." As people of Hawaii, I believe that we know this and we live this. But, this way of living is truly exemplified in the Community Schools model.

Schools, community organizations and families are working side-by-side to support the development of each child and their whole well-being. The data and stories that can be shared from the 22 current (and soon to be 26) Community Schools can be utilized to showcase students' academic progress, family engagement, school success and improved community health indicators. There are more schools interested in becoming Community Schools - the data is starting to speak for itself...that this model works. I urge you to be a part of this positive movement and to choose to support Community Schools.

Your support of HB 1896 will not only positively impact next years student learners, but generations of student learners to come.

Mahalo for the opportunity to share written testimony in support of HB 1896.

Me ke aloha,
Kelly Anne Beppu

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



March 23, 2026

RE: Support of HB 1896

Dear Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Committee,

I, Evelyn Barut, support HB 1896 HD1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Education for community schools.

At Governor Sanford B. Dole Middle School, I have seen firsthand how the community school model strengthens attendance, family engagement, and student achievement by aligning school staff, families, and community partners around shared goals. Through meaningful community partnerships, family engagement has increased significantly, particularly at school events and in our Ohana Center, where we operate a food pantry to support families in need.

Families also receive health services through the Hawaii Keiki Nurses program. Access to these essential resources allows families and students to focus on consistent school attendance and academic success. These supports remove barriers that might otherwise prevent students from thriving.

If this bill passes, it will help Dole Middle School and its community sustain the progress they have worked so hard to achieve in both academic performance and family engagement. Continued investment will ensure that this strategy can expand to benefit even more students and families.

I urge you to support this bill that would sustain the community schools movement in Hawai'i and organize our resources towards the success of learners, families, and communities.

Sincerely,

Evelyn Barut
Community School Coordinator