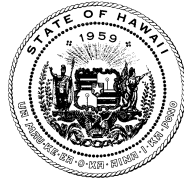


JOSH B. GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



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

STATE OF HAWAII  
HAWAII STATE PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM  
'OIHANA HALE WAIHONA PUKE AUPUNI O KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII  
OFFICE OF THE STATE LIBRARIAN  
44 MERCHANT STREET  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
(808) 586-3704

**Senate Committee on Education  
March 25, 2026, 1:12pm  
State Capitol, Room 229**

**HB1934 HD1 – Relating to Libraries**

The Hawai'i State Public Library System (HSPLS) **supports the intent** of H.B. 1934 to require the State Librarian to establish an Imagination Library of Hawai'i Program to provide one free book each month to children from birth through five years of age who reside in the State.

Currently, Hawai'i has an affiliate program of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library called 'Ohana Readers. Hawai'i's former first lady Dawn Amano-Ige, in partnership with state and non-profit partners, launched the program on Moloka'i on October 19, 2019. Since then the program has expanded to 10 additional zip codes on Kaua'i, Lāna'i, Maui and Hawai'i Island. Families are encouraged to enroll their newborn to five-year-old children at their local public library. The program encourages children to develop a love of reading by building their own library of books at home.

The expansion of this program statewide is an investment that will help improve literacy starting with our youngest readers. To ensure the success of this ongoing literacy initiative, the program will need a consistent and sustained source of funding.

We respectfully request the Legislature's support for:

- Full State funding in the first two years of the program, and in years three to five of the program, State funding could be reduced on a sliding scale to no less than 50% of the estimated total cost in the fifth and subsequent years of the program. The funding may also be utilized for administrative costs incurred by the non-profit organization to establish and maintain the program. Full funding in the first two years will provide sufficient time for a non-profit to develop community awareness and identify long-term funding strategies to ensure future sustainability of the program; and
- One permanent position for HSPLS to coordinate and manage the statewide program in conjunction with the non-profit organization.

We note that at this time, current fundraising by the Friends of the Library of Hawai'i supports a variety of statewide HSPLS programs, including the annual Summer Reading Program. HSPLS would have concerns if fundraising for the Imagination Library to address the reduced State match in future years were to impact fundraising that supports HSPLS programs.

With the support of the Legislature, this program could help create a Hawai'i where every child grows up reading books from their first library at home and being prepared to learn when they enter school. This program will help to build pathways to that future.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify on HB1934 HD1 and your continued support of our communities and the Hawai'i State Public Library System.



March 23, 2026

Chair Donna Mercado Kim,  
Senate Committee on Education  
Hawai'i State Capitol  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

RE: HB1934 HD1  
Relating to the Imagination Library of Hawai'i Program

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

Friends of the Library of Hawai'i (FLH) **supports** HB1934 HD1 with requested amendments. FLH strongly supports the intent of the bill to establish statewide access to Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. This proven early literacy program provides matching funds to deliver high-quality, age-appropriate books to children each month from birth to age five, helping families build home libraries and support early childhood learning. The program operates through affiliate partners who enroll families and enhance the impact of each book through programming and other educational opportunities.

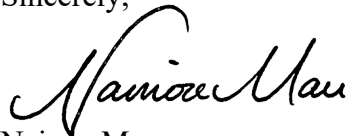
Friends of the Library of Hawai'i currently serves as the nonprofit administrator of the 'Ohana Readers affiliate. 'Ohana Readers was established in 2019 by the Office of the Governor under then First Lady Dawn Amano-Ige, in partnership with the Hawai'i State Public Library System with funding from the Learning to Grow program of the University of Hawai'i Center on the Family and the Hawai'i Department of Human Services. Our affiliate later expanded to include a hui of funders and community partners. Our affiliate currently serves the islands of Moloka'i and Lāna'i, the west and north communities of Kaua'i, the Ka'ū region of Hawai'i, and Hāna on Maui, focusing on rural and underserved communities with limited access to books. Demand across the state far exceeds current funding. According to the Imagination Library cost estimator, there are 82,021 keiki in Hawai'i who are eligible for this program.

Friends of the Library of Hawai'i respectfully requests clarification and amendment of the funding provisions in the bill. As currently written, the bill states that a nonprofit partner provide 50 percent of funding for the program. At this time, FLH does not have access to funding sources sufficient to meet this match, nor are we aware of existing funding streams that could immediately satisfy this requirement.

To ensure a successful statewide launch, FLH recommends that the State fully fund the program during the first two years of implementation, with a gradual reduction in state funding to a 50 percent match by year five. This phased approach would allow time to build local partnerships, secure sustainable funding, and develop the infrastructure necessary to support enrollment growth. Achieving the goal of 65 percent of eligible keiki by year five will require a significant investment, estimated at approximately \$800,000 for the 50 percent match in that year alone. Total program costs should include administrative fees, allowances for a dedicated staff member, and travel expenses necessary to conduct outreach, attend community events, and register families statewide. Demonstrated program success during this initial period will strengthen efforts to secure long-term, sustainable funding.

Statewide implementation of this program would ensure equitable access for all keiki in Hawai‘i, strengthening families and improving school readiness. We respectfully urge the Hawai‘i State Legislature to support HB1934 HD1, with amendments, and invest in this cost-effective, globally proven program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nainoa Mau". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nainoa Mau  
Executive Director



Malaki 25, 2026  
1:12 PM

## COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair  
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair  
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street

Re: HB1934 HD1 - RELATING TO LIBRARIES.

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani and honorable members of the committee:

The Prince Kūhiō Hawaiian Civic Club (PKHCC) strongly supports HB1934 HD1, which directs the State Librarian to establish an Imagination Library of Hawai‘i Program to provide one free, age-appropriate book each month to every child from birth through five and to contract with a nonprofit partner for statewide implementation.

‘Ohana Readers, an affiliate of Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, focuses on family reading and offers high-quality, age-appropriate books monthly to children under five. Hawai‘i’s former First Lady Dawn Amano-Ige, with state and nonprofit partners, launched ‘Ohana Readers on Moloka‘i on October 19, 2019. Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library is a 60-volume set beginning with *The Little Engine That Could*; each month a new book is mailed in the child’s name directly to their home free of charge.

Current outcomes are alarming: only about 35% of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) students in HIDOE meet language-arts proficiency and 25% meet math proficiency, a sharp decline from reported literacy rates in the Hawaiian Kingdom before 1893. NHPI students also face the highest suspension rates, largest gaps between college aspiration and participation, overrepresentation in the school-to-prison pipeline, and some of the highest suicide and attempt rates in the U.S.

The statewide model—pairing the State Librarian and the Hawai‘i State Public Library System with a dedicated nonprofit—is a proven path to scale. National evidence shows Imagination Library participants enter kindergarten with stronger literacy skills, and home delivery helps eliminate “book deserts.” At roughly \$2.60 per child per month (book plus shipping), the program is a cost-effective early intervention. Since at least 2002 the Imagination Library has engaged with Native and Indigenous communities, and today offer Native and indigenous authored books and bilingual selections.

HB1934 HD1 is a fiscally efficient, evidence-informed, and scalable strategy to boost early literacy and kindergarten readiness for all Hawaii's keiki, including our NHPI children.

Founded in 1964, the Prince Kūhiō Hawaiian Civic Club was established to promote the education and social welfare of people of Hawaiian ancestry. Its objectives include supporting high ethical standards in business, industry, and professional fields.

Mahalo for your consideration of our position.

Me ke aloha,

Shauna Kahiapo, Esq.  
Pelekikena

[president@pkhcc.org](mailto:president@pkhcc.org)



TO: The Senate Committee on Education

DATE: Wednesday, March 25, 2026

RE: TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB1934 *Relating to Libraries; Imagination Library; State Librarian; Appropriation*

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

My name is Scott Herrick, and I am the State Relations Director for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.. I am writing to express our strong support for HB1934, which seeks to establish and fund a statewide "Imagination Library" program in partnership with the State Librarian.

**The Power of Early Literacy** The most critical window for literacy development occurs between birth and age five. Research consistently demonstrates that the presence of books in the home is one of the strongest predictors of future academic success. HB1934 ensures that every child in Hawaii, regardless of their family's income or geographic location, receives a high-quality, age-appropriate book delivered to their home every month.

**A Proven Public-Private Partnership** The Imagination Library model is not a traditional government mandate; it is a collaborative effort. Our foundation provides the global infrastructure, book selection by experts, and logistical coordination. However, the program relies on a 50/50 cost-sharing model.

By passing HB1934, the State of Hawaii provides the necessary "match" to unlock private donations and local community support. This ensures that:

- **Sustainability:** The program is supported by both public and private stakeholders.
- **Efficiency:** Funds go directly toward the cost of books and postage, with the foundation absorbing the overhead of the ordering system.
- **Equity:** We can reach children in rural and underserved areas where access to physical bookstores or libraries may be limited.

Long-Term Impact on Hawaii's Education System When children start kindergarten with a foundation of literacy, they are more likely to read at grade level by the third grade—a key milestone for long-term graduation rates and workforce readiness. HB1934 is a proactive investment that reduces the long-term need for costly remedial education within the Department of Education.

We respectfully request that the Committee pass HB1934 to ensure all of Hawaii's children have the tools they need to succeed from day one.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Scott Herrick

State Relations Director US

**HB-1934-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 11:59:11 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/25/2026 1:12:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Oppose w/comment several non-profit organizations providing this services.

IRAN WAR IS COSTING TAXPAYERS 1BILLION \$ A DAY. HOW WILL FEDERAL FUNDING IMPACT THE SOH BUDGET?

1934 HB RELATING TO LIBRARIES.

**HB-1934-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 1:06:01 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/25/2026 1:12:00 PM

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

Comments:

Our Libraries are a gateway to knowledge for our Keiki. Please support HB1934. Thank you.

Ted Meehan

**HB-1934-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 11:38:08 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/25/2026 1:12:00 PM

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

Comments:

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

I strongly support H.B. 1934, H.D.1. This measure expands early access to books for young children and strengthens literacy development during the most critical years of learning.

Research shows that having books in the home significantly improves early literacy, with one study noting that providing children’s books is a “cheap and feasible intervention” that improves long-term outcomes. Access to books from birth supports school readiness and is directly connected to third-grade reading proficiency, one of the strongest predictors of future academic success.

This program is especially important in Hawai‘i, where geographic isolation, cost of living, and uneven access to resources can limit opportunities for families, particularly on neighbor islands and in underserved communities, to build home libraries. Providing a free book each month helps close these gaps and supports shared reading experiences.

Mahalo for your consideration.