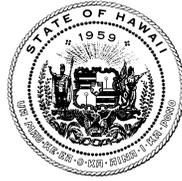


JOSH B. GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

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

**House Committee on Finance
March 5, 2026, 2:00pm
State Capitol, Room 308**

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 3, 2026

Chair Chris Todd,
House Committee on Finance
Hawai'i State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

RE: HB1934 HD1, Hearing of March 5, 2026
Relating to the Imagination Library of Hawai'i Program

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, 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, 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 fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nainoa" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Mau".

Nainoa Mau
Executive Director



waikikicommunitycenter.org

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1934 HD1 RELATING TO LIBRARIES

TO: Chair Todd, Vice-Chair Takenouchi & Members
House Finance Committee

FR: Caroline Hayashi, President

Waikiki Community Center (WCC) **supports HB 1934 HD1.**

WCC has operated a preschool in our community since 1978. Over the decades, we have served generations of families and have seen firsthand how early access to books shapes a child's readiness to learn.

Many of the families we serve are ALICE households — working families striving to make ends meet but with little discretionary income for things like children's books. It is not uncommon for children in our classrooms to ask if they can take books home because they have very few, or none, of their own.

Programs like Imagination Library can make a meaningful difference. Receiving one book each month from birth through age five helps build home libraries and encourages families to read together. There is also something powerful about a child having books that belong to them — books they can hold, revisit, and share with their family.

There are relatively few interventions have been shown to make a measurable difference in closing the achievement gap between children from lower-income families and their more advantaged peers. One of them is quality early education. On the home front, research shows that when families read regularly with their young children, it can significantly strengthen early language development and school readiness.

Waikiki Community Center respectfully urges your support of HB1934 HD1.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact me at (808) 923-1802 or chayashi@waikikicommunitycenter.org if you have any questions.



**Parents And
Children Together**

**BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIPS
THAT MATTER MOST**

ParentsAndChildrenTogether.org

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1934 HD1 RELATING TO LIBRARIES

TO: Chair Todd, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, & Members,
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Trisha Kajimura, Vice-President of Strategy and External Affairs

DATE: March 5, 2026 at 2:00 PM

Parents and Children Together (PACT) supports HB 1934 HD1 Relating to Libraries, which establishes an Imagination Library of Hawaii Program to provide one free book each month from birth through five years of age who reside in the State.

PACT is an active member of the early learning community in Hawaii, operating Early Head Start and Head Start programs on Oahu and Hawaii Island. PACT also founded Parkway Village Preschool, the state's first Pre-K-Only public charter school in Kapolei. The early years of a child's life are critical for all domains of child development and learning. Books play an important role in learning for young children and also in their relationships with adults. Reading to children is an activity for bonding and attachment that contributes to healthy development and building the foundation of parent-child relationships.

Founded in 1968, PACT is a statewide community-based organization providing a wide array of innovative and educational social services to families in need. Assisting more than 18,000 people across the state annually, we help identify, address, and successfully resolve challenges through our 20 programs. Among our services are early education programs, domestic violence prevention and intervention programs, child abuse prevention and intervention programs, childhood sexual abuse supportive group services, child and adolescent behavioral health programs, sex trafficking intervention, poverty prevention and community building programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact me at (808) 847-3285 or tkajimura@pacthawaii.org if you have any questions.



Written Testimony on HB1934 HD1

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE DATE: March 5, 2026

TO: Chair Chris Todd, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and Members of the House Committee on Finance

FROM: Scott Herrick, State Relations Director, USA – Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

RE: HB1934 HD1 – Relating to Libraries – **SUPPORT**

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

On behalf of The Dollywood Foundation and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL), I am writing to express our **strong support for HB1934 HD1**, which would establish the Imagination Library of Hawai'i Program.

Our mission is to inspire a lifelong love of reading by providing high-quality, age-appropriate books to children from birth to age five, regardless of family income. Since its inception, the Imagination Library has gifted over 200 million books globally. Today, we are proud to say that **1 in 6 children** under the age of five in the United States is enrolled in our program.

The Proven Impact of the Statewide Model

While the Imagination Library operates in thousands of communities, the "Statewide Model" proposed in this bill—pairing the State Librarian and the Hawai'i State Public Library System (HSPLS) with a dedicated non-profit partner—is the gold standard for success.

- **Kindergarten Readiness:** National data consistently demonstrates that DPIL participants score significantly higher on literacy assessments upon entering kindergarten. By delivering books directly to the home, we help eliminate the "book deserts" that contribute to the achievement gap.
- **Cost Efficiency:** Through the Dollywood Foundation's global scale, we provide these books at a wholesale cost of approximately **\$2.60 per child per month**, which includes the cost of the book and high-quality shipping. This makes it one of the most cost-effective early childhood interventions available.

We wish to acknowledge the incredible work already being done by the **'Ohana Readers** program. Since 2019, local leaders and partners have demonstrated that the families of Hawai'i value this resource. HB1934 HD1 is the next logical step—moving from a localized effort to a comprehensive, statewide "equity of access" model.

We also recognize the concerns raised regarding long-term sustainability. The state/local partnership funding structure in this bill provides the necessary "runway" for the designated non-profit to build community awareness and secure private philanthropic support without competing for existing library funds.

At the Imagination Library, we view ourselves as the engine that supports the local vision. We do not seek to replace local initiatives, but to provide the infrastructure that allows them to scale. By passing HB1934 HD1, Hawai'i joins a growing number of states committed to ensuring that every child starts their educational journey with a library of their own.

We respectfully urge the Committee to pass this measure. Thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully,

Scott Herrick State Relations Director, USA

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

HB-1934-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 7:56:25 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support HB1934 HD1, which aids early childhood literacy and family reading by building home libraries. Literacy is a key factor in developing an educated and engaged population. We should support efforts to bring reading material to more people..

HB-1934-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 8:40:48 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Seuta'atia Cochran	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Hawaii House Committee on Finance,

I strongly support this bill!

Mahalo nui loa,

Seuta'atia Cochran

Ewa Beach, 'Iolani Schools

HB-1934-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 12:53:55 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deanna Espinas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support of this bill because it is so needed to support our library access and books which our children need access to.

HB-1934-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 8:37:15 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daphne (Delta) Westcot	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Whom it May Concern,

I support this bill as it opens a way to ensure young children have access to books and supports early learners to read and become literate. As a teacher I have seen many 9th and 10th graders with literacy in reading at a 3rd and 4th grade level an early reader program could change this alarming statistic.

Aloha Daphne (Delta) Westcot

HB-1934-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 9:02:44 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I testify as an individual in strong support of H.B. 1934, H.D.1.

Early access to books plays a critical role in developing literacy and fostering a lifelong love of reading. Research shows that simply making children’s books available in the home can significantly improve early literacy outcomes. As one study notes, *“Making children’s books available to children is a cheap and feasible intervention that could change home dynamics to improve the future economic fortunes of children...”* [National Library of Medicine, Journal of Global Health](#)

Programs like this help families build home libraries and support shared reading during the most formative years of development. I respectfully urge the committee to pass H.B. 1934, H.D.1.

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-1934-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 9:46:14 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelli McLeod	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill.

Research has consistently shown the benefits that occur when infants, toddlers, and children have consistent access to books- they develop stronger language skills, learn about the world around them, and are more prepared for school. Reading with parents or older readers also provides an opportunity for bonding, which helps develop stronger relationships. When very young children are given consistent access to books, they are more likely to continue to read as they grow up. Numerous studies have also shown that reading fiction builds empathy, social-emotional growth, and understanding of the world. These are all traits that benefit children when navigating today's world.

The Imagination Library ensures all children in Hawai'i will have access to books, which lowers the barrier of entry, allowing all children the benefits of engaging with books at an early age. The books in the program are also carefully selected, ensuring they are developmentally appropriate and of high quality, enhancing the benefits for the children engaging with these books.

This program would benefit the children and youth of Hawai'i immensely.

HB-1934-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 10:10:16 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support the expansion of Imagination Library to the whole state of Hawai‘i through HB1934. Imagination Library supports reading together as an ‘ohana, and HB1934 is an opportunity for Hawai‘i to become a leader in early childhood literacy.

HB-1934-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 10:11:42 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Meera Garud	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in **strong support for HB1934 HD1**, which would establish an Imagination Library of Hawai'i Program to provide one free book each month to keiki from birth through five years of age. Numerous studies have found a strong relationship between access to books in the home with higher literacy rates. The Imagination Library is a well-established program with decades of evidence showing that children spend more time reading and have an increased love for reading.

This program would be a smart investment in our children's future and would pay off with more students entering school ready to read and learn. Mahalo for considering this bill.

HB-1934-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 10:51:03 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tai Arakawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing in **strong support of HB1934**. I know firsthand how important it is for children to have early access to books, especially physical books. Not only does it encourage parents to spend quality time with their children, it also helps children by getting them used to spending longer periods of time concentrating. This is especially important in today's world where attention spans are getting shorter and reading comprehension is becoming increasingly difficult for children.

Not every family has the time to go to the public library, especially since working hours often overlap with library business hours. Easy access to a supply of books is the first step in investing in our children's future. I encourage the Committee to consider the benefits HB 1934 can bring to Hawaii's youngest population.

HB-1934-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 12:11:46 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristen Tanaka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1934 HD1.

HB-1934-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 1:00:35 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Meriah Barnes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am greatly in support of the Imagination Library bill, [HB1934](#) HD1 and supports early childhood literacy and family reading by building home libraries.

HB-1934-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 1:05:20 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
roberta cestare	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support funding to establish an Imagination Library of Hawai'i Program. Providing free, classic books to children from birth to five years of age encourages their love of reading. Promoting childhood literacy opens doors to lifelong learning. Funding this program will expand this service to more children and their families throughout the State of Hawai'i.

HB-1934-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 1:20:16 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Dear Honorable Representatives,

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is a wonderful program that should be expanded throughout the Hawaiian Islands to encourage family reading and early childhood literacy. This is a worthy project with outreach currently in rural areas.

To launch the program, please support greater funding from the state in the early years to ensure it gets off to a good start. The selected nonprofit partner may need to have time to gather up sufficient resources for any potential funding split. The community could really benefit from this program now. Children need to develop good reading habits at an early age, and the Imagination Libraries will do just that. Please make every effort to get this program started now. Our keiki deserve it!

Thank you for your careful consideration.

Sincerely,

Lynnae Lee

HB-1934-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 1:20:16 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Dear Honorable Representatives,

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is a wonderful program that should be expanded throughout the Hawaiian Islands to encourage family reading and early childhood literacy. This is a worthy project with outreach currently in rural areas.

To launch the program, please support greater funding from the state in the early years to ensure it gets off to a good start. The selected nonprofit partner may need to have time to gather up sufficient resources for any potential funding split. The community could really benefit from this program now. Children need to develop good reading habits at an early age, and the Imagination Libraries will do just that. Please make every effort to get this program started now. Our keiki deserve it!

Thank you for your careful consideration.

Sincerely,

Lynnae Lee

HB-1934-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 3:02:50 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Allyson Ota	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support statewide funding for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.