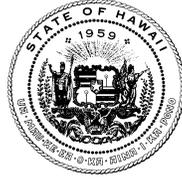


JOSH B. GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

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
'ŌIhana 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 Education
Tuesday, February 17, 2026, 2:00pm
State Capitol, Room 309**

HB1934 – 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 and your continued support of our communities and the Hawai'i State Public Library System.



February 13, 2026

Chair Justin Woodson,
House Committee on Education
Hawai'i State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

RE: HB1934, Hearing of February 17, 2026
Relating to the Imagination Library of Hawai'i Program

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

Friends of the Library of Hawai'i (FLH) **supports** HB1934 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.

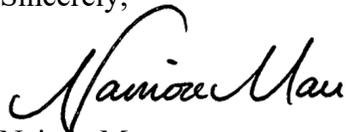
Friends of the Library of Hawai'i currently serves as the nonprofit administrator of the 'Ohana Readers affiliate. 'Ohana Readers was established in 2019 by the Office of the Governor under then First Lady Dawn Amano-Ige, in partnership with the Hawai'i State Public Library System with funding from the 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 currently 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 written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nainoa Mau
Executive Director

HB-1934

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 12:33:01 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dr. Amy Bossler	O’ahu inclusive co-op	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Representative Justin H. Woodson

Hawai’i House of Representatives Education Committee

H.B. 2376

February 17, 2026

2pm, conference room 309

My name is Dr. Amy Bossler. I am a former licensed and highly qualified Hawai’i DOE educator and completed a Doctorate of Education in Exceptionalities Studies at the University of Hawai’i at Manoa in 2015.

I am testifying on behalf of the O’ahu Inclusive Co-op, a group of 194 families located in central O’ahu. We STRONGLY support H.B. 1934.

Supporting the Imagination Library isn’t just “donating to books.” It’s investing in kids before the world tells them who they are.

Here’s why it matters:

1. It Builds Literacy From the Start

Children enrolled receive one free, high-quality book every month from birth to age five. That’s up to 60 books in a child’s home before kindergarten.

Early book access is strongly linked to:

- Stronger vocabulary
- Better kindergarten readiness
- Higher reading proficiency in elementary school

And literacy affects everything — graduation rates, job opportunities, even long-term health outcomes.

2. It Helps Families Who Might Not Otherwise Have Books

Not every home has a bookshelf. For some children, that monthly delivery is the only book they own.

It removes barriers — no income requirements, no paperwork hoops — just books in mailboxes.

It Creates Family Connection

Those books don't just teach letters — they create moments:

- Bedtime routines
- Snuggles on the couch
- Big sibling reading to little sibling
- Parents building confidence reading aloud.

It strengthens families while building brains.

4. It's Community-Powered

Local partners raise funds to cover book costs in their area. When you support it, you're:

- Keeping dollars local
- Supporting children in your community
- Joining a proven, scalable literacy effort

5. It Has a Track Record

Founded by Dolly Parton in 1995, the program now serves children in multiple countries and has mailed millions of books worldwide.

It's not experimental — it's established, studied, and widely respected.

In summary, supporting the Imagination Library means:

- More books in little hands
- More confident readers
- More prepared kindergarteners
- More hopeful futures

Early literacy is powerful. This program simply makes that access universal. Please support HB2376.

Respectfully yours,

Dr. Amy Bossler and the O'ahu Inclusive Co-Op

HB-1934

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 7:30:39 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rexann Dubiel Shanahan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a veteran, 40 years, as a third grade teacher at Sunset Beach Elementary, I fully support HB1934. There are many families with young children in Hawaii who cannot afford or who do not have access to books.

Affording a child the opportunity to have his or her own book makes reading special. Establish a love of reading early, and it becomes a gift for the betterment of the individual and society.

Again, I know first hand the value of giving a child a book. It makes a difference! Please, pass HB1934.

HB-1934

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 7:45:37 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diane Starkey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

February 14, 2026

Chair Justin Woodson,

House Committee on Education

Hawai'i State Capitol

Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

RE: HB1934, Hearing of February 17, 2026

Relating to the Imagination Library of Hawai'i Program

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

I am writing to express my strong support for HB1934, which would establish statewide access to Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

This program is a proven, cost-effective way to support that mission by delivering high-quality, age-appropriate books to children from birth to age five. By helping families build home libraries, we directly improve school readiness and foster a lifelong love of learning.

Currently, the "Ohana Readers" affiliate serves only specific regions, but the demand for these resources exists across our entire state. Statewide implementation is essential to ensure equitable access for all keiki in Hawai'i, regardless of where they live.

As a volunteer at the Kailua Public Library and with Friends of the Library of Hawai'i, I see the vital need for this investment in our future. I respectfully urge the Committee to support HB1934 and invest in this cost-effective, globally proven program.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,

Diane Starkey

Kailua

HB-1934

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 8:57:48 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rose Chismar	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this important bill for the literacy of the young children of this beautiful state!

HB-1934

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 10:52:47 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/17/2026 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**, 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

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 8:02:44 PM

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

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

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, OPPOSE

The alternative is a LIBRARY APPLICATION for the child's first library card. Application can be distributed during discharge date.

1934 HB RELATING TO LIBRARIES.

HB-1934

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 12:45:04 PM

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

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

Comments:

Strong support!

HB-1934

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 1:03:57 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Selena Mobbs	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Esteemed Committee Members,

I am writing in **strong and enthusiastic support of HB1934**, which establishes the Imagination Library of Hawaii Program to provide a free, age-appropriate book each month to every keiki in our state from birth to age five.

As a public school librarian working with our haumāna and ‘ohana each day, I see firsthand how powerful early access to books can be. When keiki grow up surrounded by stories, language, and ‘ike, they enter school not only better prepared academically, but more confident, curious, and connected. Programs like this help us build a culture of reading across our pae ‘āina — from our rural valleys to our urban neighborhoods.

In many of our rural communities, especially on neighbor islands and in more remote areas, there is a significant dearth of certified public school librarians. Too many of our schools operate without a trained library professional to guide information literacy, research skills, and equitable access to resources. These communities can become what experts call “information deserts” — places where access to high-quality books, digital tools, and literacy support is limited or inconsistent. As we attempt to solve the problems that lead to the creation of the information deserts by addressing the ever-evolving needs of public schools and libraries, we can also respond with aloha to fill the need.

HB1934 is one way we can respond with aloha. By ensuring that every keiki receives books at home — regardless of income, geography, or circumstance — we affirm that literacy is not a privilege, but a right. We strengthen ‘ohana as the first kumu. We nurture pilina through shared reading. We cultivate a love of mo‘olelo that reflects both global perspectives and the unique cultural heritage of Hawai‘i.

When keiki receive books in the mail, it sends a powerful message: *You matter. Your education matters. Your imagination matters.* That steady, predictable access helps level the playing field long before kindergarten begins.

Educators committed to equity and Nā Hopena A‘o — to belonging, responsibility, excellence, aloha, total well-being, and Hawai‘i — know that early literacy is foundational. Investing in universal book access is an investment in our collective future.

I respectfully urge your strong support of HB1934 to expand opportunity, reduce inequity, and help Hawai'i build a lasting culture of reading rooted in 'ike, aloha, and access for all.

Mahalo nui loa for your consideration.

HB-1934

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 1:23:15 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephanie Chou	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Committee on Education

Rep. Justin H. Woodson, Chair

Rep. Trish La Chica, Vice Chair

RE: H.B. 1934

Position: Support

Aloha,

I'm writing to voice SUPPORT for HB1934. The Imagination Library is not an experimental or new program--there's widespread evidence of its efficacy in many other states. Early and frequent access to books is linked with better vocabulary and higher reading proficiency through elementary grades.

Some families don't have easy, consistent access to books due to financial and transportation constraints. The Imagination Library solves this problem by delivering books right to parents' doorsteps.

Additionally, this program won't cost the state significantly, as local partners raise funds to provide books in their areas.

Starting the Imagination Library in Hawaii is an easy win for legislators, families, and the children who are the bright stars of our future. Let's help them navigate literacy now so they can guide us in years to come.

Mahalo,

Stephanie Chou

HB-1934

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 4:30:18 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Veronica Milford faavi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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- Better kindergarten readiness
- Higher reading proficiency in elementary school

And literacy affects everything — graduation rates, job opportunities, even long-term health outcomes.

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- Parents building confidence reading aloud

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In summary, Supporting the Imagination Library means:

- More books in little hands
- More confident readers
- More prepared kindergarteners
- More hopeful futures

Early literacy is Powerful. This program simply makes that access universal. Please support HB1934!

HB-1934

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 12:53:46 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Scott Herrick	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of HB 1934

Greetings Chair Woodson, La Chica, and members of the Committee,

My name is Scott Herrick and I serve as the State Relations Director for the U.S. for Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library. We strongly support and urge your passage of **HB 1934** during this legislative session.

Currently, local partners across the islands fund this program independently. This bill provides a critical state match that will transition these local efforts into a sustainable, statewide literacy infrastructure.

In my role, I often look to the history of the regions we serve for inspiration. Hawai‘i has a truly remarkable legacy; in the 19th century, the Hawaiian Kingdom achieved one of the highest literacy rates in the world, surpassing most nations at the time. By passing this bill, we are honoring that historical standard and ensuring every child has the tools to meet it once again.

The return on investment for this program is exceptional. At \$2.60 per book, the total cost to provide a child a full home library from birth to age five is approximately \$156. To put that in perspective, Hawai‘i’s total annual expenditure for K-12 education is now \$25,485 per student. For less than one percent of what the state spends on a single year of school, we can provide five years of foundational literacy.

The need for this intervention is clear. While Hawai‘i is a national leader in preschool quality, Hawai‘i currently ranks among the lowest in access, with only a small fraction of three- and four-year-olds enrolled in state-funded programs according to the National Institute for Early Educational Research.

Programs like Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, with a high quality book being delivered once a month addressed to the child at home, make an outstanding “insurance policy” toward Kindergarten readiness. Groundbreaking 2026 research involving over 86,000 caregivers shows that children in Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library program are fifteen times more likely to engage in shared reading and nearly three times more likely to demonstrate essential print concepts than their peers.

Finally, in an increasingly digital world where iPads are replacing interactions, the physical nature of these books is vital. A tangible book fosters a unique cognitive connection and a shared family experience that digital devices cannot replicate. We urge the committee to pass HB 1934 and join a growing list of twenty-two other U.S. States that have created a Statewide Imagination Library program to make early literacy a permanent priority.

I appreciate the opportunity to share Dolly's vision with the great state of Hawai'i.

Respectfully,

Scott Herrick State Relations Director, US

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library