



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

Date: 03/03/2026

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 308 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: FIN

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB2004, HD1, RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Extends the Librarian Pilot Program established by Act 135, Session Laws of Hawaii 2025, through 2030. Authorizes the Department of Education to select a second school complex on Oahu to be part of the pilot program if no appropriate school complex on the neighbor islands can be identified. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports HB2004 HD1 and respectfully offers comments.

A certified librarian has the background and expertise to provide quality library services and is supportive of Department goals and objectives including:

- Enhancing student achievement through improved literacy and research skills;
- Developing information literacy and critical thinking to prepare students for success in a digital world;
- Encouraging a love of reading by expanding access to diverse and engaging library materials;
- Supporting teachers and curriculum integration by incorporating research and media literacy into instruction; and
- Providing equitable access to print and online resources to ensure all students have the tools they need for academic success.

HB 2004 seeks to amend Act 135 (Session Laws of Hawaii 2025) to extend the librarian pilot program from two years to five. This extension is beneficial and necessary for the following reasons:

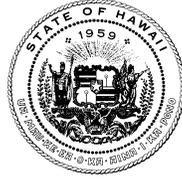
1. **Alignment with Hiring Cycles:** The original two-year timeline did not align with the spring teacher transfer period, preventing a full launch for the 2025–2026 school year.
2. **Implementation Fidelity:** A five-year window allows the Department to implement the program with greater rigor.
3. **Revised Timeline:** Under this extension, the Department used the 2025–2026 school year to determine the complex selection criteria, identify the two pilot complexes and recruit certified librarians during the Spring 2026 hiring window for a full start in the 2026–2027 school year.

While the Department appreciates the appropriation in this measure, we ask that it does not adversely affect the priorities identified in the Department's Board-approved budget.

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

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
'ŌI HANA HALE WAIHONA PUKE AUPUNI O KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
OFFICE OF THE STATE LIBRARIAN
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**House Committee on Finance
March 3, 2026, 2:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Room 308**

HB 2004 HD1 – Relating to Education

To: Rep. Chris Todd, Chair
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Finance

The Hawai'i State Public Library System (HSPLS) **supports the intent** of HB 2004 which extends the Librarian Pilot Program established by Act 135, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2025, through 2030; authorizes the Department of Education to select a second school complex on Oahu to be part of the pilot program if no appropriate school complex on the neighbor islands can be identified.

School libraries and school librarians are a vital part of educational support for all students from K-12. School librarians are certified teachers who also hold a master's degree in library science, qualifying them to work with classroom teachers on lessons plans, support literacy, teach research skills and digital literacy skills. Our students are in, and will continue to be, a part of a complex world of information and disinformation. School librarians are vital for the development of the information skills needed to thrive now and in the future.

While it is optimal to have a school librarian in each school, this bill would extend the period of time for the pilot program that was funded and approved by the Legislature in 2025. Extending the time frame for the pilot program and expanding the program to include an additional complex area will ensure that more teachers and students will have access to the expertise of a school librarian to enhance the development of curriculum and build students' reading, information research and digital skills.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 2004 HD1 and your continued support of our communities and the Hawai'i State Public Library System.



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TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Item: HB 2004, HD1 – Relating to Education

Position: Support

Hearing: Tuesday, March 3, 2026, 2:00 pm, Room 308

Submitter: Osa Tui, Jr., President - Hawai'i State Teachers Association

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

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association supports H.B. 2004, HD1, which extends the Librarian Pilot Program within the Department of Education through June 30, 2030. This measure ensures the continuation of vital rotating support services provided by certified librarians to school complexes on O'ahu and a neighbor island.

By extending the program from two years to five, the legislature allows for a more comprehensive evaluation of how dedicated librarian support impacts student literacy and research skills. School librarians are essential partners in education, providing expertise that strengthens classroom instruction and fosters a lifelong love of learning among our students.

H.B. 2004, HD1 also provides the Department of Education with the necessary flexibility to identify a second O'ahu complex if a suitable neighbor island site is not available. This ensures that the two full-time equivalent teacher positions can be fully utilized to benefit Hawai'i's school communities regardless of geographic constraints.

We urge the committee to pass this bill to continue this important investment in our school libraries and the professional staff who manage them.

Mahalo.

HB-2004-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/28/2026 12:03:20 PM

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

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

Comments:

Testimony to the House Committee on Finance

Tuesday, March 2, 2026 2:00PM

RE: HB 2004 Extends the Librarian Pilot Program established by Act 135, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2025, through 2030. Authorizes the Department of Education to select a second school complex on Oahu to be part of the pilot program if no appropriate school complex on the neighbor islands can be identified.

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

I am writing to support HB 2004 as a private individual who has a background in academic librarianship. The decline in both school libraries and degreed School and Media specialists (Master's in Library Science, with a school library specialization) has had a ripple effect on the students we are seeing in our colleges and universities. Over the last decade or so, more undergraduates are attending university lacking information literacy skills that they should have begun learning at the elementary school level. This includes the ability to locate reliable sources of information, evaluate if information is reliable, and incorporate this information into their assignments. Reading comprehension and the ability to write are also affected. This applies to students across the board, and STEM students need to know how to access peer-reviewed resources in particular.

Access to libraries and qualified librarians is important regardless of whether a child intends to go to college. Information and media literacy are skills that everyone can use both inside the classroom and in the real world. Passing HB 2004 and extending the Librarian Pilot Program will allow schools time to find and hire qualified librarians while not appropriating any more funds

than has already been set aside. We owe it to our children to invest in their futures and provide them with skills that they can use even after school.

Thank you,

Tai Arakawa

1 March 2026

House Committee on Finance
Rep. Chris Todd, Chair
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 South Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Representative Todd, Vice Chair Rep. Takenouchi, and Honorable HCF Members Representatives Hartsfield, Morikawa, Hussey, Perruso, Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Templo, Kitagawa, Yamashita, Kusch, Alcos, Lee, Gedeon, Miyake, and Oda:

I am writing to you in **very strong support** of **HB 2004 “RELATING TO EDUCATION”** and **HB1595 HD1 “RELATING TO THE STATE LIBRARIAN.”** Both of these bills will advance librarianship for the people of Hawai'i. Let me briefly give my reasoning as someone who has studied libraries for the past three decades. Forgive me for sending one letter on both issues, but you will be voting on both bills in the same hearing.

I appreciate that the legislature supported a pilot project to develop a new model of service by school library media specialists. This is an important measure as there is a critical need to offer our keiki's school library service. Far too many schools don't have a school library media specialist who can help teachers and principals to raise reading and writing skills. We know that school library media specialists are doing great things with teaching information literacy and critical thinking skills that are so important in the era of AI and misinformation/ disinformation. The present bill gives the DOE some more time and flexibility with the project that should allow it to have more success.

Good principals recognize this and recruit school library media specialists who become leaders on their campus in shaping innovative curricula that bring together disparate fields and help keiki see connections between disciplines like sciences and traditional arts. They also foster a recreational love of reading that encourages people to self-discovery and citizenship.

I wasn't fortunate enough to grow up in Hawai'i, but was fortunate that all of my public schools in suburban Minneapolis had amazing librarians who helped me to go beyond the curriculum. They fostered my discovery of different literatures, arts, histories, and even helped me find a safe place when my own family was falling apart. These experiences helped give me empathy and global and local understanding that made me who I am today – perhaps much more than my regular classroom instructors who had to take care of larger classes, which included students who were gifted to those who were struggling academically. Good school library media specialists also assist teachers and counselors to help students recover from challenges like coping with the fires in Maui that are impacting young people there.

As an educator of future librarians and school library media specialists, I've seen amazing graduate students enter this field. The new generation of school library media specialists are helping our keiki deal with emotions and trauma to the complexities of sorting out information from disinformation that surrounds them during their waking hours online. They've also helped them to connect with literature from the host culture and their own ethnic experience in ways that are deeply healing and liberating.

However, I've been concerned that few of our graduate LIS students stay in the School Library Media pathway because they worry about future employment, so instead they become academic librarians, or add to the brain drain leaving the state. Passing this resolution will be an important step in also encouraging students to invest in the education needed to be an engaged school librarian who can help transform our schools to generate future-oriented learners who can think about science and the host culture, or discover innovative connections that will guide our future.

I also strongly support **HB1595 HD1 "RELATING TO THE STATE LIBRARIAN"** because I want the state to be able to recruit and retain innovative people who can help HSPLS to continue developing in the new era. The current salary is hardly competitive on a national level for someone with managerial experience of a system with over 50 branches. Forcing the current salary restrictions encourages any State Librarian to start planning his/her next position rather than doing the long-term strategic planning and relationship-building that is required to help our libraries continue to adapt and serve.

As a proud Democrat, I should add that I believe these positions echo the PLATFORM OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAI'I (2022 State Convention, 28 May 2022, p3):

*We support establishing a dedicated funding source to deliver a **quality public education and library services to every student, regardless of learning capacity or ability to pay, in an environment conducive to the learning process. These resources shall be made available at every level, from preschool through higher education, including life-long learning.***

Before I conclude, I should point out that these views don't necessarily represent the views of my employer, but I would be remiss if I didn't express my personal and professional conviction that this is one of the most critical issues facing our state, and that your support of this resolution is critical to help make sure we can recruit and retain the best State Librarian and school library media specialists for our keiki. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions at my personal email drew.wertheimer@gmail.com. Thank you again for considering my very strong support for this resolution.

Yours with Aloha,



Andrew B. Wertheimer, MLS, Ph.D.

HB-2004-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 8:40:13 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sabrina Nicole Thomas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill because it will not allocate additional resources, it will only give the Department of Educationb more time to spend money that has already been appropriated. I support libraries and this bill!

HB-2004-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 9:37:01 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sunyeen Pai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony March 3, 2026 to House Committee on Finance in support of HB 2004 HD1, Relating to Education.

Dear esteemed members:

I am in support of this bill, given my career experience as a retired community college librarian who has worked with both 4-year universities and 2-year community colleges at the University of Hawai‘i. As this bill is working to revive a sorely depleted and missed public educational service for our keiki and will not cost any additional funding, I ask this committee to support this bill.

For your reference, I submitted more detailed testimony in support of this bill on February 17.

With much aloha and mahalo,

Sunyeen (Sunny) Pai, PhD, Retired Professor and Librarian, Kapi‘olani Community College

HB-2004-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 11:08:15 AM

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

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

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Kelly Yamamoto, a librarian from Hawaii Island. I am in support of HB2004 and I urge the committee to support this bill.

HB2004 - Extends the Librarian Pilot Program established by Act 135, Session Laws of Hawaii 2025, through 2030. Authorizes the Department of Education to select a second school complex on Oahu to be part of the pilot program if no appropriate school complex on the neighbor islands can be identified.

Please note that this important bill will give the Department of Education more time to spend funds that has already been appropriated.

Thank you for your consideration.

HB-2004-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 11:38:08 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/3/2026 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 HB2004**, which would extend the School Librarian Pilot Program established by Act 135 last year. This extension would not require any additional funds. Instead, it would allow the already appropriated funds to be used through 2030. This would allow the program to have enough time to actually be implemented in its entirety. Mahalo for considering this bill.