

**JOSH GREEN, M. D.**  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
LT. GOVERNOR  
KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



**J.N. MUSTO, PhD**  
CHIEF NEGOTIATOR  
KE PO'O KŪKĀKŪKA

**STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII**  
**OFFICE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**  
**KE KE'ENA MĀLAMA LIMAHAHA AUPUNI**  
**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**  
**KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA**  
235 S. BERETANIA STREET, SUITE 1201  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-2437

Statement of  
**J.N. Musto, PhD**  
Chief Negotiator, Office of Collective Bargaining

Before the  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING**  
Wednesday, February 18, 2026  
10:00AM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 430

In consideration of  
**HB2122 HD1, RELATING TO TEACHER HOUSING**

Chair Evslin, Vice Chair Miyake, and the members of the committee:

The Office of Collective Bargaining (OCB) appreciates the intent of HB2122 HD1, which establishes the Teacher Housing Assistance Program to provide housing vouchers to certain eligible teachers. However, we must respectfully oppose this measure.

Wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment are subject to negotiations as provided in Hawaii Revised Statutes, §89-9.

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



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

**Date:** 02/18/2026

**Time:** 10:00 AM

**Location:** 430 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

**Committee:** HSG

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

**Title of Bill:** HB2122, HD1, RELATING TO TEACHER HOUSING.

**Purpose of Bill:** Establishes the Teacher Housing Assistance Program to provide housing vouchers to certain eligible teachers. Appropriates funds out of the Teachers' Housing Revolving Fund. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) has concerns with HB 2122 HD 1 that establishes a Teacher Housing Assistance Program, and cannot support it in its current form. However, the Department looks forward to working with the Legislature to find a way forward.

The Department supports efforts to address Hawaii's teacher recruitment and retention challenges. Our state's high cost of living and shortage of affordable housing impact our ability to attract and retain qualified educators throughout our school system.

While the Department understands the intent of this measure, the successful implementation of HB 2122 HD 1 would require additional dedicated staff resources to establish the teacher housing assistance program, process applications, verify eligibility, and administer this program.

The Department remains committed to working with the Legislature to develop comprehensive solutions to our educator workforce challenges.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2122 HD 1.

**Testimony to the House Committee on Housing  
Representative Luke A. Evslin, Chair  
Representative Tyson K. Miyake, Vice Chair**

**Wednesday, February 18, 2026, at 10:00AM  
Conference Room 430 & Videoconference**

**RE: HB2122 HD1 Relating to Teacher Housing**

Aloha e Chair Evslin, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports House Bill 2122 HD1 (HB2122 HD1), which establishes the Teacher Housing Assistance Program to provide housing vouchers to certain eligible teachers. Appropriates funds out of the Teachers' Housing Revolving Fund.

HB2122 HD1 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Economic Action. The Teacher Housing Assistance Program described in this bill will lift a significant cost burden off the teachers that educate Hawaii's future workforce. Creating economic security for our teachers decreases turnover and reinforces a stable learning environment for our keiki. The effect would be improved quality of life for teacher, and therefore improved quality of life for students and families.

Emergency hiring and substitute teachers in the event turnover create measurable negative impact for learning outcomes in the classroom. In an article published by the *American Educational Research Journal*, a study of more than 850,000 New York City 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders observed that students experiencing teacher turnover demonstrated lower test scores by anywhere from 6-10% of a standard deviation, depending on the subject matter. These negative effects were found to be emphasized in disadvantaged communities. While these differences might seem small, they represent a material difference in performance across hundreds of thousands of students. This impact diminishes institutional return on investment for the State education system and depresses the learning outcomes of our future workforce. HB2122 HD1 is a measure that improves quality of life and stability for our teachers and represents an important investment in the future of our keiki and economies.

For these reasons, the Chamber respectfully asks to pass House Bill 2122 HD1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to

foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.

February 18, 2026

TO: Chair Evslin and Members of the House Housing Committee  
RE: HB 2122 HD1, Relating to Teacher Housing

Dear Chair Evslin and Committee Members,

Housing Hawai'i's Future is a nonprofit dedicated to creating opportunities for Hawai'i's next generation by ending the workforce housing shortage.

**We support House Bill 2122 HD1.** This bill would establish the Teacher Housing Assistance Program to provide housing vouchers to eligible teachers.

Hawai'i continues to experience one of the highest housing cost burdens in the nation. For many public school teachers - particularly early-career educators - housing costs consume an outsized portion of take-home pay. This dynamic contributes to persistent recruitment and retention challenges, especially in neighbor island and hard-to-staff schools.

By establishing a targeted housing voucher program, HB2122 provides near-term relief that can help stabilize the educator workforce while broader housing supply solutions continue to advance.

At the same time, we note that demand-side assistance programs are most effective when paired with sustained efforts to increase overall housing production. Accordingly, we encourage continued investment in policies that expand zoning flexibility, streamline permitting, and support workforce housing development, so that assistance programs like this operate within a healthier and more responsive housing market. **Please advance HB2122 HD1.**

Thank you,



Lee Wang  
Executive Director  
Housing Hawai'i's Future  
[lee@hawaiisfuture.org](mailto:lee@hawaiisfuture.org)



Perry Arrasmith  
Director of Policy  
Housing Hawai'i's Future  
[perry@hawaiisfuture.org](mailto:perry@hawaiisfuture.org)



**HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION**  
AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

**RANDY PERREIRA**, Executive Director • Tel: 808.543.0011 • Fax: 808.528.0922

The Thirty-Third Legislature, State of Hawaii  
The House of Representatives  
Committee on Housing

Testimony by  
Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 18, 2026

H.B. 2122, H.D. 1 – RELATING TO TEACHER HOUSING

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO wishes to provide comments on H.B. 2122, H.D. 1, which proposes to establish a Teacher Housing Assistance Program to provide housing vouchers to certain eligible teachers and appropriates funds out of the Teachers' Housing Revolving Fund.

Under Act 172, SLH 2023, the legislature identified affordable housing as a key strategy for recruiting and retaining the education workforce; not just teachers. Similarly, the legislature should consider providing a "workforce home assistance program" to make other government employees eligible since they face the same low salaries and high cost of living.

The HGEA represents thousands of employees who work for the DOE and public charter schools who make less than a starting Hawaii teacher's salary. Some of these employees also work in hard-to-staff locations with high turnover. They, too, should benefit from a housing assistance program being administered by the department for which they work. They, too, deserve to be eligible for a housing voucher to assist with rent, mortgage, or a down payment for their primary residence.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on H.B. 2122, H.D. 1.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira  
Executive Director



## **HOUSE BILL 2122, HD1, RELATING TO TEACHER HOUSING**

FEBRUARY 18, 2026 · HSG HEARING

**POSITION:** Support.

**RATIONALE:** The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 2122, HD1, relating to teacher housing, which establishes the Teacher Housing Assistance Program to provide housing vouchers to certain eligible teachers.

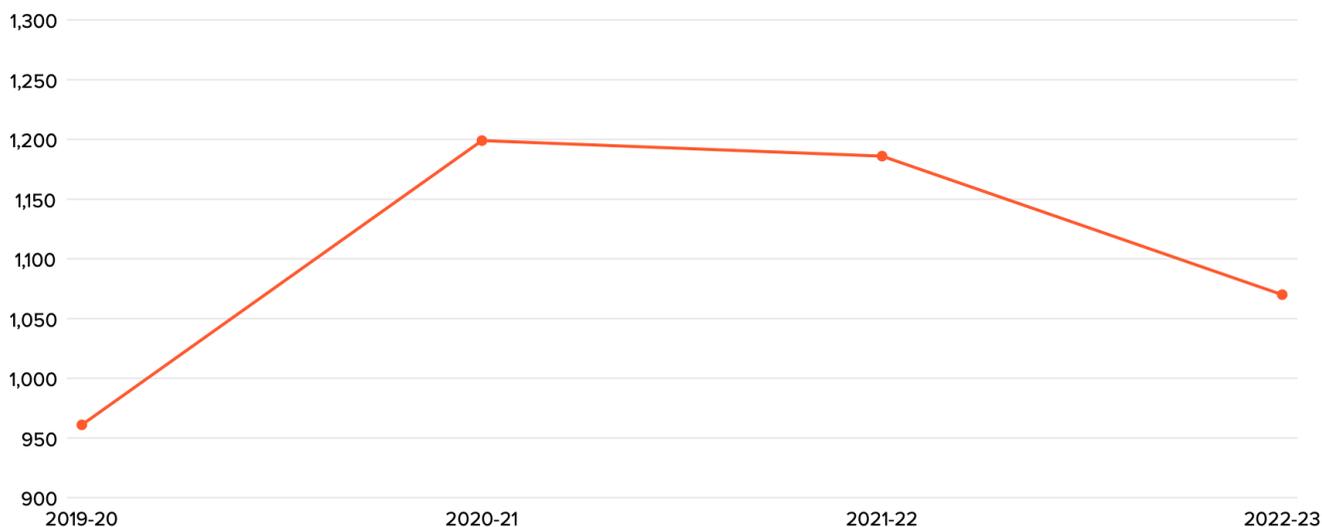
Teachers are the most important professionals in increasing student achievement. According to numerous studies, however, Hawai'i's average teacher salaries are the lowest in the nation when adjusted for cost of living. A 2020 study conducted by APA Consulting on behalf of the Hawai'i Department of Education found that when compared with other high-cost geographic locations, Hawai'i teachers are paid \$7,700 to \$26,000 less than their peers in school districts with similar costs of living, depending on length of service.

While that pay gap is decreasing because of the State Legislature's effort to fund differential pay increases and resolve salary compression in recent years, teachers are still underpaid compared to other professions that require a similar level of education. **Establishing programs to make housing affordable for teachers and other members of the education workforce would help offset the low wages experienced by Hawai'i's educators.**

A 2022 survey by the Annenberg Institute at Brown University placed Hawai'i among the 10 states with the lowest teacher-to-population ratio. Moreover, as *Honolulu Civil Beat* reported in August of 2024, voluntary teacher separations remain high, at over 1,000 per year (see chart below).

### Voluntary teacher separations, 2019 to 2023

The number of teachers annually leaving the DOE remains high but has started to decline following the pandemic.



DOE has not released data for the 2023-24 school year.

Chart: Megan Tagami/Civil Beat • Source: [Hawaii DOE](#)

These trends are further exacerbated by the aging teacher workforce. The Hawai'i State Teachers Association has repeatedly cautioned against being overly optimistic about positive teacher retention data, with a wave of experienced educators expected to retire in the next few years. Moreover, the state is over reliant on unlicensed teachers to fill vacant positions. A December report found that 48 percent of new teachers in classrooms statewide are not fully licensed. As the Honolulu Star-Advertiser's editorial board recently wrote, "That is completely unacceptable."

We need to find permanent solutions to address our state's ongoing teacher shortage. Hawai'i residents face some of the highest housing costs in the nation, at more than twice the national average. **Researchers who authored the National Low Income Housing Coalition's *Out of Reach 2025* report found that a full-time worker would need to earn \$49.19 per hour—or \$102,315 per year—to afford a two-bedroom apartment at fair market value in our state,** with

Honolulu experiencing a 67 percent increase in fair market rent between 2005 and 2015. Average rent for a two-bedroom unit surpassed \$2,000 well before the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

One out of every four households in Hawai'i report that they are “doubling up” or are three paychecks or less away from being homeless, per the Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice. **Additionally, 52 percent of households are severely cost-burdened, meaning that they pay more than 30 percent of their income on housing.**

A recent survey conducted by the Holomua Collective found that 60 percent of residents face worries about not being able to pay a monthly bill and 63 percent face difficulties in saving money from their paychecks for future emergencies, retirement, or other expenses. A staggering 70 percent of middle-class respondents to Holomua's survey say they will—or are unsure if they will have to—relocate in the coming years. As Holomua Collective states in its report on the findings, “These are the very workers powering Hawai'i's economy, now on the brink of leaving their homes behind.” That population includes the teachers who are tasked with educating our keiki.

To deliver the schools our keiki deserve, we must recruit and retain qualified educators. Our children's future depends on our ability to meet that challenge.

**Contact: [educationcaucusdph@gmail.com](mailto:educationcaucusdph@gmail.com) · 808-679-7454**

**HB-2122-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 8:25:01 AM

Testimony for HSG on 2/18/2026 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Glen Kagamida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SUPPORT

To: Representative Luke A. Evslin, Chair  
Representative Tyson K. Miyake, Vice Chair  
Committee on Housing

From: Veronica Moore, Individual Citizen

Date: February 17, 2026

RE: House Bill 2122 HD1  
Measure Title: RELATING TO TEACHER HOUSING.  
Report Title: Teacher Housing Assistance Program; Teacher Recruitment and  
Retention; Teachers' Housing Revolving Fund; Appropriation (\$)

To All Concerned,

My name is Veronica Moore and I support House Bill 2122 HD1. Thank you for  
introducing this bill.

Sincerely,

Veronica M. Moore



# KumuKonnnect

“Make nō ke kalo a ola i ka palili”

“The Taro may die but lives on in the young plants that it produces”

February 18, 2026

## **Testimony in Support of HB 2122 Relating to Teacher Housing**

Aloha Chair Evslin, Vice Chair Miyake, and members of the Committee,

My name is Luke Nohea Gee and I am a 11 grader from Kealakehe High School. I am writing in support of bill HB2122, which would establish a teacher housing assistance program to provide housing vouchers for eligible teachers.

As students, we see firsthand how important teachers are to our education. Teachers are mentors, role models, and trusted adults who help us learn, grow, and prepare for our futures. Our teachers are the roots of entire communities, including those beyond school grounds. When schools struggle to keep teachers, our keiki feel the impact.

When I talk to teachers at my school, they tell me the economic and housing struggles of being a teacher. Many teachers at my school often have to live with 2-3 other teacher roommates to pay for housing. Teachers teach because they care and they have passion. When economic barriers are present, teachers find ways to navigate around those barriers to pursue their passion to educate students. However, due to the high cost of living in Hawai'i, almost all teachers cannot live sustainably or comfortably.

Personally, I've had many experiences where teachers have left in the middle of the school year and it has greatly impacted my education in those classes. For my Freshman year of high school, I decided to take Spanish 1, with hopes to receive a Seal of Biliteracy my senior year. However, our teacher never showed up to class, and I learned Spanish from a substitute who didn't speak Spanish. I passed the class whilst not actually gaining a basic understanding of the Spanish language. In my sophomore year, I took Spanish 2, with hopes for a better year. However, our teacher ended up leaving less than halfway through the year. Our entire class was transferred to an online program through Edgenuity. As a result, I was too behind in Spanish literacy to receive my Seal of Biliteracy and that goal was out of reach.

When teachers leave, it disrupts student learning and makes it harder for students to succeed. Strong relationships with teachers take time to build, and constant turnover affects both academic progress and emotional support.

Supporting educators through housing vouchers helps ensure that students like me have stable, experienced teachers who can focus on teaching instead of worrying about financial stress.

Investing in teachers is investing in students. When teachers are supported, students succeed. Stable schools create stronger communities across all islands.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,



**Luke Gee**  
**Executive Director | KumuKonnnect**  
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