



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

Date: 02/12/2026
Time: 02:00 PM
Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE
Committee: EDN

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB2127, RELATING TO CIVIC EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Establishes a Civic Education Grant Program to provide support to public middle and intermediate schools in providing civic education to students through department approved programming. Establishes a Civic Education Trust Fund.

Department's Position:

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) supports HB 2127, which establishes a civic education grant program and a civic education trust fund to strengthen civic education in public middle and intermediate schools.

The Department supports strengthening civic education at all grade levels; however, an emphasis on the middle and intermediate school years is especially important. Early adolescence is a formative period for developing civic dispositions such as critical thinking, respectful dialogue, collaboration, and an understanding of democratic principles. Strategic investment during these grades prepares students to enter high school with the foundational knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for deeper civic engagement and informed participation in school and community life.

High-quality civic education depends on well-prepared educators and engaging instructional practices. Ongoing teacher professional development is essential to building educator capacity to facilitate inquiry-based discussion, guide students through complex civic issues, and connect classroom learning to real-world contexts. Equally important are project-based and experiential learning opportunities that allow students to apply civic knowledge and skills by researching issues, evaluating multiple perspectives, and taking informed action. These approaches increase student engagement and help translate civic concepts into authentic learning experiences.

The bill also aligns with the Department's Nā Hopena Aho (Hā) framework by fostering a sense of belonging, responsibility, voice, and participation among students. Civic learning opportunities supported through this measure help students develop the dispositions of citizenship, mālama, and kuleana that are essential to Hawai'i's democratic society and local communities.

The creation of a civic education trust fund within the state treasury enables the Department to support these efforts through grants, gifts, donations, investment income, and other sources helping to sustain and expand civic learning opportunities statewide.

Furthermore, the Department respectfully requests an amendment to section 2. The current language refers to the "office of curriculum and instructional support services." This should be amended to the "office of curriculum and instructional design" to accurately reflect the Department's organizational structure.

By strengthening civic education during the middle and intermediate grades, HB 2127 helps ensure that students are prepared for the expectations of high school civics coursework and are equipped to grow as informed, engaged citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2127.



**House of Representatives Committee on Education
Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Supports HB 2127
Thursday, February 12th, 2 PM in Conference Room 309 & Videoconference**

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

Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action strongly supports HB 2127.

A healthy democracy relies on citizens who are informed and involved. Creating a Civic Education Grant Program and Trust Fund will give steady support so that middle and intermediate school students can access valuable civic learning opportunities.

Civic education often relies on inconsistent school resources or short-term funding. With a permanent funding structure, HB 2127 makes sure civic education is seen as an essential public service, not just an extra activity.

Many young people in Hawai'i say they feel left out of decisions that affect their futures. Civic education gives students the knowledge, skills, and confidence to take part in public life and understand how government works.

When people know more about civics, they are more likely to take part in democracy. That's why we respectfully ask for your support of HB 2127.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick'.

Anne Frederick, Executive Director
Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action

Testimony to the Thirty-Third Legislature, 2026 Regular Session

House Committee on Education

Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 12, 2026 at 2:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 309 & Videoconference

Testimony By
Colin Moore
Commissioner

Commission to Promote and Advance Civic Education (PACE Commission)

Associate Justice
Lisa M. Ginoza
Chair

Representative Amy A. Perruso
Vice-Chair

Prof. Troy J.H. Andrade

Ku'uleianuhea Awo-Chun

Deanna D'Olier

David D. Day, Esq.

Rosanna Fukuda, MAEd

Debora Halbert, Ph.D.

Nathan G. Kam

Senator Dru M. Kanuha

Matt M. Mattice

Prof. Colin Moore

Ruth K. Oh, Esq.

Magistrate Judge
Wes Reber Porter

Bill No. and Title: House Bill No. 2127
Relating to Civic Education

Purpose: Establishes a Civic Education Grant Program to provide support to public middle and intermediate schools in providing civic education to students through department approved programming. Establishes a Civic Education Trust Fund.

PACE Commission's Position:

The PACE Commission strongly supports the purposes of House Bill No. 2127 to:

1. Establish a civic education grant program within the Department of Education (DOE) to support civic education in public middle and intermediate schools through department-approved programming;
2. Create a civic education trust fund to provide sustainable, dedicated funding for civic education programming, curriculum implementation, teacher professional development, and student civic-learning opportunities; and
3. Establish an oversight structure requiring approval by a social studies educational specialist and annual reporting to ensure accountability and effectiveness.

This bill represents a critical investment in Hawai'i's civic infrastructure and addresses systemic challenges that have long limited the State's ability to provide equitable, high-quality civic education to all students.

The Critical Middle School Years

The legislature correctly identifies that middle school and intermediate school represent a "pivotal period in which young people form lasting understandings of their role in public life and their connection to community, government, and 'āina." Research consistently shows that civic attitudes, knowledge, and participation habits developed during adolescence have lasting effects on lifelong civic engagement. By focusing resources on this critical developmental stage, House Bill No. 2127 targets the moment when students are most receptive to developing the civic skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for active participation in our democracy.

Evidence from the PACE Civics Survey

The PACE Commission recently completed an extensive Civics Survey of public and private school educators throughout the state. A total of 883 educators, both teachers and administrators, responded to the survey. The findings provide compelling evidence for the urgent need addressed by House Bill No. 2127. The full Civics Survey Report is located on the General Resources page of the PACE website at <https://www.civicshawaii.org/resources/>.

Limited Professional Development

Professional development is a key factor in strengthening civics education in Hawai'i's public schools. DOE teachers broadly agreed that the highest priority for professional learning is improving civics education pedagogy, especially best practices for engaging students. Three-quarters of administrators and 71% of teachers identified this as the most important area for professional development in civics[1]. Unfortunately, access to civics-specific training remains severely limited. Only 17% of DOE teachers reported receiving civics-specific training at least once a year[1].

This gap in professional development directly impacts the quality of civic instruction students receive. The civic education trust fund created by House Bill No. 2127 would provide the sustainable resources necessary to expand professional development opportunities for middle and intermediate school teachers, ensuring they have the pedagogical tools to engage students effectively in civic learning.

Inadequate Resources

The survey results revealed that limited professional development opportunities and a shortage of civics-focused resources are major barriers to effective civics instruction[1]. Among DOE teachers, only 26% reported satisfaction with the quality of civics teaching and learning at their school. Additionally, 45% reported that available civics education resources were inadequate[1].

The resource gap is particularly acute at the elementary and middle grade levels. Only 13% of teachers in grades 3–5 and 18% of those in grades K–2 indicated they had sufficient materials[1]. When examining middle school grades specifically, only 26% of middle school teachers reported having access to adequate civics-focused materials [1]. This gap highlights a critical area for investment, because elementary and middle school teachers play a foundational role in fostering civic understanding during these formative years.

As one survey respondent noted, "Too much pressure to teach other content" was the top challenge identified by 56% of surveyed teachers[1]. This reflects the reality that without dedicated funding and resources, civics education is often pushed aside in favor of subjects with more established support structures.

Addressing Structural Funding Gaps

As the Civics Survey results demonstrate, one of the major challenges to having a more robust and expansive civics education program in Hawai'i public schools is the lack of stable, dedicated resources. The trust fund created by House Bill No. 2127 would provide a mechanism for the DOE to receive funding from a variety of sources—including legislative appropriations, federal funding, and private grants and donations—all dedicated exclusively to the purpose of improving and supporting civics education in public middle and intermediate schools.

This focused funding mechanism is essential because, as the bill's findings correctly state, "civic education is often reliant on uneven school-level capacity, discretionary funds, or short-term grants that cannot sustain long-range program design." Without a reliable funding mechanism, disparities in civic opportunity widen, and the State's obligation to prepare young people for informed participation in our shared governance is weakened.

Supporting Civic Participation Through Grant-Based Programming

The grant program structure established by House Bill No. 2127 is well designed to address the varied needs of Hawai'i's school communities. By allowing individual schools to apply for grants to support civic education programs, the bill recognizes that effective civics education must be responsive to local contexts and community needs while remaining aligned with statewide standards and priorities.

The survey revealed that teachers across grade levels are already employing effective strategies when resources are available. For instance, 40% of middle school teachers (grades 6-8) report discussing current events frequently or daily, and 39% engage students with real-world issues at least frequently[1]. Additionally, 27% of middle school teachers report that they frequently or almost daily engage students in exploring solutions to real-world problems[1]. These practices represent exactly the kind of engaged, inquiry-based civic learning that should be expanded and supported through the grant program.

The annual reporting requirements in House Bill No. 2127—requiring participating schools to report on implementation of civic education programming and curriculum, teacher development, and progress in meeting evaluation metrics—ensure accountability while allowing the DOE to identify and share best practices across schools.

Building on the Schools of Democracy Program

One example of how dedicated civics education resources can transform student learning is the DOE's Hawai'i Schools of Democracy program. Mililani High School and Maui High School were the first to be designated as Schools of Democracy, followed by Kalani High School and Kailua High School. This year, the program has expanded to intermediate schools, with 'Ewa Makai Middle School and Waialua High and Intermediate being the first to receive the designation.

The designation as a School of Democracy means that, after a review process, these schools have demonstrated a rigorous commitment to civic learning, aligned with the core standards for social studies; opportunities for civic learning across the curriculum and through project learning; and a school culture that embraces the Aloha Spirit. This is just a glimpse and start of what is possible.

By establishing a dedicated funding stream through House Bill No. 2127, many more middle and intermediate schools across the state will have the resources to develop similar programs and achieve this level of civic education excellence. The grant program establishes the infrastructure to support schools in developing comprehensive civic education programs that serve as models for others.

Investing in Hawai'i's Civic Future

The civic education trust fund and grant program established by House Bill No. 2127 represents more than a policy initiative. It is a fundamental investment in Hawai'i's civic future. By creating opportunities for every middle and intermediate school student in Hawai'i, regardless of geography, income, or school resources, to have meaningful access to high-quality civic learning, this bill affirms that civic education is a core public good essential to the health of our democracy.

The evidence from the PACE Civics Survey is clear: educators across Hawai'i recognize the importance of civics education and are ready to do more when provided with adequate resources, professional development, and institutional support. As one survey finding noted, "There are exciting possibilities for strengthening civics education in HIDOE schools. By making targeted investments in resources, expanding professional learning, and ensuring school-wide prioritization, Hawaii can better prepare students to become informed, engaged citizens who actively contribute to a democratic society"[1].

House Bill No. 2127 provides the structural foundation and sustainable funding mechanism to turn these possibilities into reality.

Conclusion

The PACE Commission strongly supports House Bill No. 2127 and urges the Legislature to pass this bill, establishing both the civic education grant program and the civic education trust fund. By creating a permanent, purpose-restricted funding source for civic education in middle and intermediate schools, the Legislature will strengthen Hawai'i's students' ability to develop the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to participate fully in the life of our democracy.

The needs identified in the PACE Civics Survey—inadequate resources and limited professional development can be addressed through the framework established by this bill. Now is the time to make the strategic investment in civic education that our students and our democracy require.

Brief background on the PACE Commission: The PACE Commission was created pursuant to Rule 23 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of the State of Hawai'i, issued on January 7, 2021. The purpose of the PACE Commission is to promote and advance civic education for students and citizens throughout Hawai'i. The commission has fourteen members appointed according to Rule 23 by the following: Chief Justice of the Hawai'i Supreme Court, Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Superintendent of the Department of Education, Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the District of Hawai'i, President of the University of Hawai'i, Dean of the William S. Richardson

House Bill No. 2127. Relating to Civic Education
House Committee on Education
Thursday, February 12, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.
Page 5

School of Law, Hawai'i State Bar Association, Hawai'i Association of Independent Schools, and two members selected by the other appointed members.

Thank you for hearing this bill and for the opportunity to provide testimony.

References

[1] PACE Commission to Promote and Advance Civic Education. (2025). *From Classroom to Community: Advancing Civics Education in Hawaii* [Civics Survey Report]. <https://www.civicshawaii.org/resources/>

To: House Committee on Education
Re: HB 2127-Relating to Student Transportation
Hawai'i State Capitol room 309 & Via Videoconference Friday,
February 12, 2026, 2:00 PM

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice La Chica, and Respected Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! (HCAN Speaks!) I am testifying in **STRONG SUPPORT of HB2127**, which would establish a Civic Education Grant Program and a Civic Education Trust Fund to support public middle and intermediate schools in delivering strong civic education statewide.

Hawai'i is a place unlike any other, a vibrant crossroads of cultures deeply grounded in ohana, community, and the Aloha Spirit. Our local values teach us not just to care for one another, but to participate, contribute, and steward our shared home and future. Civic education is how we help keiki understand both the workings of our democracy and their unique role within it; not just as learners, but as future leaders, neighbors, and decision-makers.

In recent years, Hawai'i's civic education initiatives like those advanced by the Commission to Promote and Advance Civic Education (PACE) have shown what's possible when students are given opportunities to engage with government, history, and community issues in meaningful ways. These programs help students see that democracy isn't something distant; it's lived in our schools, in `ohana discussions at the dinner table, and in how we care for the land and people of this pae `āina. HB2127 supports these efforts by:

- Investing in our young leaders: Middle and intermediate school is a formative time. Providing resources for schools to implement strong civics programming means students learn early — through discussion, problem-solving, and community connection — what it means to be an active, informed participant in civic life.
- Supporting equitable access to civic learning: Too often, access to civic education depends on where a student lives or what resources their school has. This bill's grant program helps ensure every keiki throughout the state has a chance to build civic knowledge and confidence.
- Anchoring civic learning sustainably: By creating a dedicated trust fund, the legislature signals that civic education isn't optional or one-off — it's essential to preparing students for lifelong participation and leadership in our democracy.

For Hawai'i to remain a place where our children grow up knowing how to care for each other, our islands, and our shared governance, we must provide every student with opportunities to practice civic thinking and action. HB2127 invests in that future, a future where our students not only understand how government works, but also feel empowered to shape it with aloha, and courage. HCAN Speaks! respectfully urges your **strong support for HB2127**. Mahalo nui loa for your leadership and your consideration of this measure.



HOUSE BILL 2127, RELATING TO CIVIC EDUCATION

FEBRUARY 12, 2026 · EDN HEARING

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 2127, relating to civic education, which establishes a Civic Education Grant Program to provide support to public middle and intermediate schools in providing civic education to students through department approved programming, and establishes a Civic Education Trust Fund.

“We must arm today’s young people with innovative civic education that is relevant to them. Bringing high-quality civics to every school in every state of our union is the only way that the next generations will become effective citizens and leaders.” –Sandra Day O’Connor, iCivics Founder and Former U.S. Supreme Court Justice

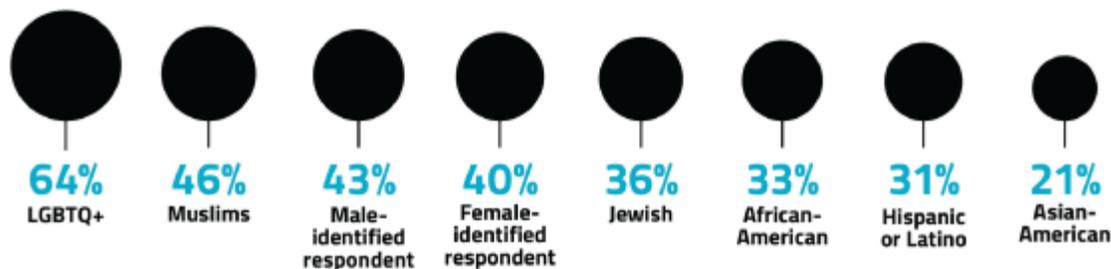
Civic education is essential to the preservation of our democracy. Today, our society is endangered by xenophobic authoritarians who seek to suppress the rights and perspectives of marginalized people. We are witnessing a resurgence of hate crimes in the U.S., which, according to the U.S. Department of Justice, have surged by nearly 80 percent since 2015. Data from the FBI showed a 168 percent increase in anti-Asian hate crime incidents from 2020 to 2021. These are shocking statistics that reveal the structural violence infecting our national community, which we must take seriously.

**Kris Coffield, Chairperson • Camron Hurt, Vice Chairperson •
Amy Perruso and Justin Hughey, SCC Members**

Increasingly, social media websites have become platforms for the perpetuation of political resentment and the reproduction of social inequality. Major social media platforms, like those owned by Meta, are currently rolling back fact-checking and misinformation detection efforts in an attempt to appease the despotic prejudices of the Trump administration. According to a 2018 report published by the data clearinghouse Statista, 64 percent of teenagers in the United States have encountered hate speech on social media. At the same time, incidents of political violence have been escalating. Cyberspace is no longer an undiscovered frontier. Today, our virtual and actual lives have become inextricably comingled. If we are not careful, though, technological advancement can generate the digital reproduction of violent extremism.

Online Hate and Harassment

Demographics of Harassment (Total harassment experienced by group)



Source: Anti-Defamation League, *Online Hate and Harassment: The American Experience 2021*

We have a responsibility to empower our keiki with the skills necessary to overcome misinformation and online hate speech, and to become fully engaged members of our civic community. As the nonpartisan organization iCivics, founded by former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, states, "Something special happens when we have confidence in our democracy. We engage. We raise a hand. We lift our voices. We listen to each other. We come together to share ideas and solve common challenges."

Increasing lack of faith in democracy among younger generations, dearth of civic knowledge, susceptibility to false information, and waning public trust contribute to our current levels of polarization, which is further exacerbated by the lack of meaningful, culturally relevant civic education in our schools. Since the earliest days of our constitutional democracy, public schools have played an essential mission in delivering civic learning. Research conducted by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) at Tufts University found that students who receive quality civic education are:

- **More likely to vote** and discuss politics at home;
- **More likely to complete college** and develop employable skills;
- **Four times more likely to volunteer** and work on community issues; and
- **More confident in their ability to speak publicly** and communicate with their elected representatives.

To preserve the foundations of our democracy for generations to come, we should invest in civic education programming in our public school system.

Contact: educationcaucusdph@gmail.com · 808-679-7454



AMERICAN JUDICATURE SOCIETY

Advocating for a fair system of justice

Finance Factors Center
Suite 618, 1164 Bishop Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Web: www.americanjudicaturesociety.org
Email: susanajs2020@gmail.com

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TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Testimony of the American Judicature Society (AJS)
In Support of HB 2127 – Relating to Civic Education
Before the House Committee on Education
February 12, 2026

Chair Justin Woodson, Vice Chair Trish La Chica, and Members
of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong
support of HB 2127, Relating to Civic Education.

Civic education is the cornerstone of a healthy and functioning
democracy. It provides students with essential knowledge about
the structure and purpose of government, the rights and
responsibilities of citizenship, and the skills necessary to
participate meaningfully in public life. High-quality civic
education also cultivates critical thinking—teaching students to
analyze information, understand diverse perspectives, and make
informed, reasoned decisions. By fostering a sense of
responsibility toward their communities and environment, civic
education prepares young people to engage constructively in
civic and community affairs throughout their lives.

The American Judicature Society is an independent, nonpartisan
organization composed of judges, lawyers, educators, students,
and community members committed to promoting a fair and
effective system of justice. Civic education is a central priority of
the AJS Strategic Plan because we believe it is foundational to a
thriving, sustainable democracy and to public trust in our
institutions. Government grants can be a critical source of
funding for civic education programs, and AJS itself was the
recipient of a one-time grant-in-aid for civics education programs
from the Legislature in 2024.

HB 2127 advances these goals by establishing a civic education
grant program and trust fund. This measure will supplement

legislatively appropriated funds with grants, gifts, and donations from federal, private, and other sources. The trust fund will expand and enrich the currently limited civic education programming, curriculum, and resource materials available to middle and intermediate school teachers. It will also create meaningful opportunities for professional development, ensuring that educators are equipped with the tools and training necessary to deliver high-quality civic instruction. Importantly, the bill includes accountability measures, requiring an annual report to the Legislature on the use and impact of the trust fund.

The American Judicature Society is committed to civic education as a vital process to support a fair system of justice. It believes a stronger civics education program in our public schools is critical to our democratic principles and a stronger society. AJS strongly supports HB 2127 and respectfully urges the Committee to pass this important measure. Thank you for your consideration of our testimony and for your commitment to strengthening civic education in Hawai'i.



The House Committee on Education
February 12, 2026
Room 309
2:00 PM

RE: HB 2127, Relating to Civic Education

Attention: Chair Justin H. Woodson, Vice Chair Trish La Chica, Members of the Committee

The University of Hawaii Professional Assembly (UHPA), the exclusive bargaining representative for all University of Hawai'i faculty members across Hawai'i's statewide 10-campus system, **supports HB 2127.**

We agree with the legislature's finding that a thriving democracy depends on an engaged, informed, and empowered citizenry. As educators in higher education, faculty see firsthand that the habits of democratic participation—including critical thinking, media literacy, and collaborative problem-solving—must be intentionally cultivated long before students reach the university level.

We strongly support the bill's intent to provide dedicated, stable resources to strengthen civic education during the pivotal middle and intermediate school years. By establishing a permanent funding source specifically for this age group, the State can ensure that young people—who are at a stage where they form lasting understandings of their role in public life and their connection to community and government—have access to the experiential learning and high-quality curriculum necessary to help bridge the gap in civic opportunity and better prepare them for higher education and active citizenship.

For these reasons UHPA supports the passage of HB 2127.

Respectfully submitted,

Christian L. Fern
Executive Director
University of Hawaii Professional Assembly

**University of Hawaii
Professional Assembly**



HOALOHA PROJECT

Serving foster keiki of Hawai'i

Aloha Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

Hoaloha Project respectfully offers **strong support** for HB2127. Civic education helps students understand how our government works, how laws are made, and how they can participate – knowledge that builds engaged, informed citizens and supports healthier communities.

We particularly support the idea that students could follow a specific bill they care about during the legislative session as a hands-on way to learn how a bill becomes law, how stakeholders engage in public policy, and how civic participation directly impacts their world. This kind of experiential learning deepens understanding far beyond the classroom and empowers students to be active participants in our democratic process.

For foster youth – many of whom grow up without parents or guardians to guide them through complex systems – grounding in civic processes and opportunities to engage with real legislative issues can be a **powerful step toward self-advocacy and informed adulthood**. Integrating structured civic education also helps close equity gaps so every student, regardless of background, has the knowledge and confidence to participate fully in our shared governance. For these reasons, Hoaloha Project respectfully urges your support and passage of HB2127.

Mahalo for your commitment to Hawaii's keiki.





To: Hawaii State House Committee on Education

RE: Testimony in STRONG SUPPORT of HB2127 Relating to Civic Education

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the Committee,

The members of AAUW of Hawai'i thank you for hearing this measure.

We strongly support HB2127 which would establish a civic education grant program to provide the support public middle and intermediate schools need in offering civic education to students.

Civic education prepares students with the knowledge, skills, and critical thinking needed for them to actively participate in civic life including turning out to vote and encourages community engagement. AAUW believes that our democracy works when everyone fully participates.

Please pass this measure to increase civic, voter, and community engagement in Hawai'i.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Younghee Overly
AAUW of Hawai'i Public Policy Committee

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) of Hawai'i is an all-volunteer, statewide chapter of a national organization with close to 4000 members and supporters across all four counties - Hawai'i, Honolulu, Kaua'i, and Maui. AAUW has state chapters in all 50 states and our mission is to advance gender equity through education and advocacy. Economic security for women is our goal.

HB-2127

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 2:05:27 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan B Roberts Emery	GreenParty of Hawai'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Susan RobertsEmery, as co chair of the Green Party of Hawai'i, we are in VERY Strong Support of HB2127, creating a Civic Education Grant Program. Civic education is essential to preparing students to think critically, understand government, and participate in our democracy. By creating a dedicated trust fund, this bill ensures civic learning is sustained.

When I lived in California, our local high school had Civics during the first semester of the senior year. The students were like sponges, and Political parties were allowed to come into the classrooms and talk about what is working and what does not work with our current electoral system. It was fun to see the students eyes light up. They were also required to work for 10 hours on a campaign, it could be political, or it could be for the local animal shelter, Homeless Shelter, medical clinics, etc. This was a win win for the community.

Please support HB2127, for the greater good.

Susan RobertsEmery

Green Party of Hawai'i

Paauilo



TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB2127, RELATING TO CIVIC EDUCATION

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

February 12, 2026

To the Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee:

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i **strongly supports HB2127**. This legislation is a critical step toward fulfilling the Party's mandate to prepare Hawai'i's youth for the complexities of 21st-century democracy.

HB2127 establishes a Civic Education Grant Program and a dedicated Trust Fund specifically for public middle and intermediate schools. These mechanisms are essential for moving civic education from an unfunded aspiration to a well-resourced reality.

The SCC recently adopted an Addendum to Legislative Priorities that designates comprehensive civics and social media literacy as a top priority for the State. HB2127 aligns with this priority in four specific ways:

- **Sustainable Funding (Section 2 - Civic Education Trust Fund):** The DPH platform affirms that a well-informed citizenry is fundamental to democracy. By establishing a permanent Trust Fund, HB2127 ensures that civic education is treated as a "core public good" rather than being subject to "uneven school-level capacity."
- **Media Literacy and Digital Resilience:** Our Legislative Priority specifically calls for "Social Media and Digital Literacy" to combat the proliferation of misinformation. HB2127 supports this by providing grants for programming that teaches students to critically evaluate online sources, understand algorithms, and resist digital echo chambers.
- **Strategic Focus on the Middle School Transition:** The DPH recognizes that students must be prepared for the "realities of the digital age" early. HB2127 correctly targets middle and intermediate schools—a pivotal period where students form their understanding of community, government, and 'āina.
- **Experiential and Collaborative Learning:** In line with the DPH's call for "active civic participation," HB2127's grant program is designed to foster "experiential civic learning" and "collaborative problem-solving," moving students from passive learners to engaged

citizens.

HB2127 provides the necessary infrastructure to achieve the Democratic Party of Hawai'i's vision for a resilient, informed, and responsible citizenry. By establishing the Trust Fund and Grant Program today, you are protecting the integrity of our democracy for tomorrow.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB2127. Should you have any questions or require further information, please contact the Democratic Party of Hawai'i at legislation@hawaiidemocrats.org.

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

My name is Christian, and I am a high school student from O‘ahu, **testifying in support of HB2127**, establishing a Civic Education Grant Program to provide support to public middle and intermediate schools in providing civic education to students through department-approved programming.

As a student, I’ve been very fortunate to have had multiple opportunities to be civically engaged and work with my communities, and this has become a huge part of my life. I’ve had the opportunity to work with Kids Voting Hawaii, a nonpartisan organization that works to promote voter participation and education amongst youth. My personal goal is to empower others, showing they can be changemakers in society, and I believe that this is best achieved through strong civic education. At school, one of my favorite classes has been Dialogues Across Differences, a class focused on fostering healthy and constructive dialogue about controversial topics. Some things we talked about were climate change, social media, autonomy, and more. This was a really eye-opening experience for me, as I heard a diverse range of perspectives that in turn shaped my own learning. I think it’s really important to recognize that it’s okay to disagree with people, as long as it's done in a respectful and constructive manner.

For these reasons, I believe this bill, HB2127, should be passed. Thank you for your consideration.

Mahalo,
Christian K.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christian K." The signature is stylized with a large, looping 'C' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'K'.

HB-2127

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 9:22:31 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry Support

2127 HB RELATING TO CIVIC EDUCATION

HB-2127

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 6:12:47 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Casey Park	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of HB2127. Providing keiki with civic education will empower them with agency over their own communities and futures. Supporting this effort is an investment in a connected, civically-engaged community.

HB-2127

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 9:40:30 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacob Wiencek	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

A proper civic education is central to the growth of young people. We must shape and support good citizens who are knowledgeable about their government and capable of exercising self-government in our republic. I urge the committee to SUPPORT this bill!

HB-2127

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:26:22 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

I am testifying in strong support of HB2127, which establishes a Civic Education Grant Program and a dedicated Civic Education Trust Fund within the Hawai‘i Department of Education. This bill invests in the foundational skills our keiki need to become informed, engaged, and empowered participants in our democracy.

Democracy is not automatic. It must be taught, practiced, and renewed with each generation. Yet civic education has been systematically defunded and deprioritized for decades, leaving too many students without the tools to understand how government works, evaluate information critically, or meaningfully participate in civic life.

HB2127 addresses this gap directly. It provides targeted funding for intermediate schools to develop and implement robust civic curricula, train teachers, and facilitate hands-on learning experiences—not textbook theory, but real engagement with how change happens in our communities. This is where critical thinking and media literacy are built.

Equally important is the establishment of a **dedicated Civic Education Trust Fund**. Too often, vital programs are launched only to wither when one-time funding expires. This trust fund ensures that civic education is treated not as an occasional pilot project, but as a sustained, permanent priority. By allowing for legislative appropriations, grants, and private donations, it creates a stable, long-term funding stream that insulates this essential work from annual budget uncertainty.

The middle school years are precisely when students are forming their understanding of society and their place within it. Investing in civic education at this stage yields returns for a lifetime—not just for individual students, but for the health of our entire democracy.

I urge you to pass HB2127 and make civic education a lasting cornerstone of public education in Hawai‘i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

HB-2127

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:33:53 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noelle Lindenmann	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing in support of HB2127, creating a Civic Education Grant Program. Civic education is essential to preparing students to think critically, understand government, and participate in our democracy. By creating a dedicated trust fund, this bill ensures civic learning is sustained.

Our society is showing what happens when we don't have sufficient civics education, and we need to provide more information for future generations.

Mahalo for this opportunity to provide testimony,

Noelle Lindenmann, Kailua-Kona

HB-2127

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:34:46 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jonathan Simonds	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB 2127 to expand access to civic education and drive civic engagement.

HB-2127

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:58:56 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brieanah Gouveia	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Testimony in Support of H.B. 2127
Relating to Civic Education**

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I strongly support H.B. 2127, which establishes a Civic Education Grant Program and Civic Education Trust Fund to strengthen civic learning opportunities for students in Hawai‘i’s public middle and intermediate schools.

A healthy democracy depends on informed, thoughtful, and engaged participants. Middle school is a formative period when students begin developing their understanding of government, community responsibility, and their relationship to place, culture, and civic life. Investing in civic education at this stage yields long-term benefits: students gain critical thinking skills, media literacy, collaborative problem-solving abilities, and the confidence to participate constructively in public life.

Currently, access to high-quality civic learning opportunities varies widely among schools, often depending on discretionary funds, temporary grants, or individual school capacity. This uneven structure creates disparities in students’ civic preparation and limits educators’ ability to plan sustained programming. H.B. 2127 addresses this structural gap by creating a stable, dedicated funding mechanism that ensures all students—regardless of geography or school resources—can benefit from meaningful civic education experiences.

The bill’s design reflects strong accountability and stewardship. It requires detailed grant applications, annual reporting, compliance with nondiscrimination laws, and oversight by educational specialists. These provisions help ensure that funds are used responsibly, transparently, and effectively to support curriculum, teacher professional development, and student learning outcomes.

Establishing a permanent trust fund also signals that civic education is not an optional enrichment activity but a core public good essential to the long-term strength of Hawai‘i’s democratic institutions and communities. By making this commitment, the Legislature affirms that preparing young people for informed participation in shared governance is a statewide priority.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to pass H.B. 2127.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support.

HB-2127

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 12:34:20 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Perez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This needs to happen, for the future of Hawaii. We are stuck in the past and pains of US Imperialism, Consumerism, and Slave-Economics rebranded and remodeled. Whats worse is that kids and adults alike do not know they are instituionalized. We need curriculum and funding into this if we are to work towards a more perfect union and decolonizing and depoveritizing the minds of our people.

HB-2127

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 12:48:56 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Theresa Schubert	Department of Education	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Committee on Education (EDU) Date: Wednesday, February 11, 2026 Time: 1:30 PM
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

Re: SB2754 – RELATING TO CIVIC EDUCATION – SUPPORT

Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

As a Student Activities Coordinator (SAC) with 22 years of experience in Hawaii’s public schools, I strongly support [SB2754](#).

Throughout my two decades of working directly with student leaders, I have seen firsthand that civic engagement is not something students "stumble into"—it must be cultivated. While middle and intermediate school students are at the ideal developmental age to form their identities as community members, our schools often lack the dedicated funding to provide the immersive, high-quality programming required to make civics feel real to them.

This bill is vital for three reasons:

1. **Critical Age Intervention:** Middle school is where we either capture a student’s interest in governance or lose it to apathy.
2. **Equity of Opportunity:** The Civic Education Grant Program ensures that a school’s ability to offer robust civic programming isn't dependent on its zip code or internal fundraising.
3. **Sustainable Infrastructure:** The creation of the Civic Education Trust Fund provides the long-term stability needed to build programs that last beyond a single school year.

I urge the committee to pass [SB2754](#) to empower the next generation of Hawaii’s leaders.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

HB-2127

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 1:19:37 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Kuzmier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am writing in support of HB2127. I support funding civics education for our keiki. It is an investment in our future. Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-2127

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 2:35:09 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joell Edwards	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Joell Edwards. I am a resident of Kaua‘i and Chair of the Kaua‘i County Democrats, but I am testifying today in my personal capacity in strong support of HB2127.

Civic education is foundational to a healthy democracy. It teaches our students how government works, how to think critically, how to engage respectfully across differences, and how to participate meaningfully in their communities. Creating a dedicated Civic Education Grant Program and trust fund ensures this work is not optional or temporary, but sustained and prioritized.

I also want to share something personal. I still use what I was taught by my high school civics teacher, Mr. Miller. He recently passed away. Up until he became ill, I would share with him my role in politics — however small — and tell him how much his class shaped my path. He helped me understand not just the mechanics of government, but the responsibility that comes with participation.

HB2127 honors educators like Mr. Miller by investing in the next generation of informed, engaged citizens. When we fund civic education, we are strengthening the future of Hawai‘i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support.

HB-2127

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 3:09:02 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Ball	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Woodson and Vice-Chair La Chica,

I'm writing both as a civic educator and parent in strong support of HB2127 and its robust support of civic education statewide. We are living through an unprecedented assault on our democratic ideals, with historically low faith in our institutions and news media among young people. In a state with the lowest voter turnout nationwide, civic education is the single best investment in the fabric of our society and the future of our democracy. Please give your full support to this necessary investment in the health of our community and our future.

With aloha,

David Ball

Waiālae-Kahala

HB-2127

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 3:58:55 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcia Kemble	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings Committee Members,

As a former school librarian who worked in local middle/high schools for 19 years, I strongly support HB2127, creating a Civic Education Grant Program. Civic education is essential to preparing students to think critically, understand government, and participate in our democracy. Now it's more evident than ever that students need to understand civics in order to appreciate the privileges and responsibilities of living in a democracy. By creating a dedicated trust fund, this bill ensures civic learning is sustained.

Mahalo for your attention.

Marcia Kemble

Makiki

HB-2127

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 6:45:05 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Justin Hughey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Committee on Education (EDN)

DATE: Thursday, February 12, 2026

TIME: 2:00 p.m.

PLACE: VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE, Conference Room 309, State Capitol

From: Justin Hughey, Second Grade Educator at Kahului Elementary

Subject: TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB2127 – RELATING TO CIVIC EDUCATION

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committees,

As a second-grade teacher, I see firsthand how the "realities of the digital age" mentioned in the Democratic Party of Hawai'i's recent Legislative Priorities are affecting our children earlier than ever. I am writing in strong support of HB2127 because we are currently in a race against time to protect our students' minds from a media landscape increasingly controlled by a handful of billionaires.

Lessons from Global Leaders: The Finland Model

We do not have to wonder if it is possible to teach these complex concepts to young children. Finland, which consistently ranks as the most resilient nation against misinformation, begins teaching civics and media literacy as early as kindergarten. By the time Finnish students reach the ages targeted by HB2127, they have already spent years learning how to fact-check, identify "fake news," and understand how digital manipulation works. In Finland, this isn't just an elective; it is a national security strategy. Hawai'i must follow this lead by establishing the funding and infrastructure provided by HB2127 to ensure our students are equally prepared to defend their democracy from digital interference.

Addressing the Resource Gap in Hawai'i Schools

The desire to teach these skills exists within our schools, but our teachers are being left behind. As reported by Civil Beat, many educators are struggling without the proper tools:

"Even before this year, teachers have said they want to prioritize civic education in their classes but aren't sure where to start. In a survey of DOE educators last year, roughly half of the

respondents said they had insufficient or outdated resources to help them teach civic education. Over 80% said they rarely or never attended professional development for the subject. Lawmakers have attempted to provide more guidance to schools on teaching controversial issues and civic education, but past efforts have fallen short."

HB2127 finally addresses this "resource gap" by providing a dedicated Trust Fund. It moves beyond "guidance" and provides the actual funding necessary for modern resources and the professional development that 80% of our teachers are currently lacking.

Why Media Literacy Starts in the Classroom

In our classrooms, students already consume "news" and information from platforms owned and manipulated by the world's wealthiest individuals. When social media algorithms and news outlets are controlled by billionaires with private interests, the truth becomes a secondary concern to profit and influence.

HB2127 is the defense our students need because:

- It breaks the "Echo Chamber": The Democratic Party of Hawai'i's Addendum to Legislative Priorities warns of the "rapid proliferation of misinformation." Without the "Social Media and Digital Literacy" instruction funded by this bill, our students are left defenseless against algorithms designed to polarize.
- It Reclaims Public Discourse: By funding civic education as a "core public good," we ensure that a student's understanding of their rights comes from a verified curriculum—not from a billionaire's curated news feed.

Conclusion

If we do not fund civic education and media literacy now through HB2127, we are effectively outsourcing the education of our children to the highest bidder. We must empower our students to be "resilient citizens in a rapidly evolving digital world" who value the Constitution of the State of Hawai'i over a social media "like" or a billionaire's agenda.

I urge you to pass HB2127 to keep the future of our democracy in the hands of the people, not the platforms.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
Justin Hughey
Second Grade Teacher
Kahului Elementary

HB-2127

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 9:18:17 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mike Landes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha chair and members of the committee,

As a high school civics teacher, parent of two public school students, and concerned citizen, I write today to encourage you to support HB2127. Recent events reveal the dramatic need for increased civic education across the nation. Here at home, I frequently notice a lack of basic political, governmental, and historical knowlegde from people of every age range. If we want a functioning society, we need to do something about this. Ours is a government by the people, but if the people are misinformed or uninformed, we are doomed to sprial further out of control. The trend in recent years where schools focus solely on standardized test performance in reading/writing/math, combined with the politicized push in some states to reduce civic education, has contributed to this situation. Establishing funds to increase civic education is one step in the right direction. Please support this bill and others that will help to create a more robust and well-rounded public education system with proper funding.

Mahalo for your time,

Mike Landes

Kihei

HB-2127

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:40:26 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
kimdonghyeon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I support HB2127, creating a Civic Education Grant Program. Civic education is essential to preparing students to think critically, understand government, and participate in our democracy. By creating a dedicated trust fund, this bill ensures civic learning is sustained.

Mahalo,

kimdonghyeon

HB-2127

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 10:04:06 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gwyn Griffiths	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I support HB2127, creating a Civic Education Grant Program. Civic education is essential to preparing students to think critically, understand government, and participate in our democracy. By creating a dedicated trust fund, this bill ensures civic learning is sustained.

Mahalo,

Gwyn Griffiths, Kailua-Kona