



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:** HB2297, RELATING TO EDUCATION.

**Purpose of Bill:** Updates Hawaii's statutory framework for adult and community education programs to ensure alignment with federal funding requirements and current best practices in those programs.

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) strongly supports HB 2297, which updates the scope of the Department's adult education programs to align with the federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

The amendments to Section 302A-443, Hawaii Revised Statutes, not only aligns with the federal AEFLA grant requirements, but also aligns with the Department's priority to enable all students to be globally competitive and locally committed. There is a greater emphasis on workforce readiness and workforce development, providing underskilled individuals with educational activities to develop the skills necessary to be gainfully employed.

The amendments also align the basic and secondary education programs with the Department's K-12 programs and provide for family and community literacy that includes financial literacy and health and wellness instruction. Thus, the adult education programs enable adult learners to develop the foundational skills necessary for a productive home and work life.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure and for your continued support of the Department's adult education programs.



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

#### Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

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Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Education  
February 12, 2026 at 2:00 p.m.

By

Lui Hokoana

Interim Vice President for Community Colleges  
University of Hawai'i System

HB 2297 – RELATING TO EDUCATION.

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

The University of Hawai'i Community Colleges (UHCC) support the intent of HB 2297 to modernize Hawai'i's adult education statute and align with federal requirements under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

We note that the primary responsibility for implementation appropriately rests with the Department of Education. However, as Section 2, subsection (6) introduces "Workplace literacy and workforce preparation" as a core component, it is essential that these programs are designed to lead into industry-recognized stackable credentials. UHCC's role would be collaborative, particularly in supporting transitions into postsecondary and workforce pathways where appropriate.

To ensure a unified "P-20" workforce pipeline, that the state avoids the duplication of services, and maximizes federal WIOA Title II (AEFLA) funding, UHCC respectfully requests the following amendment to Section 2, subsection (6):

(6) Workplace literacy and workforce preparation. Programs designed to improve the basic and employability skills of eligible individuals to function effectively in the workplace, with the goal of supporting pathways from adult education into workforce training, post-secondary career and technical education programs, academic degree pathways, and other post-secondary education and credential opportunities, including those offered by the University of Hawai'i community colleges. Such programs may include contextualized instruction developed in partnership with employers.

This level of integration is a key priority of the Hawai'i WIOA Unified State Plan 2024-2028, which seeks to eliminate silos between agencies to create a more efficient workforce pipeline. We are open to continued partnership with DOE to strengthen alignment between adult education and workforce preparation programs to ensure that every resident has a clear, non-redundant path to a living-wage career.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

**HB-2297**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 1:21:13 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ryan Mandado	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice-Chair La Chica, & Members of the Education Committee,

My name is Ryan Mandado and I'm in support of HB 2297. The modernization of language within Hawai'i's adult education statutes is not merely a clerical update; it is a vital step toward ensuring our state remains competitive and fully integrated into the national workforce development ecosystem. By aligning Hawai'i's definitions with the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), we strengthen our ability to provide high-quality, accessible, and effective education to those who need it most.

Hawai'i's Community Schools for Adults (CSAs) have a long-standing reputation for providing high-quality educational content. Modernizing our terminology ensures that the rigorous standards upheld by our local educators are recognized under federal frameworks, facilitating smoother transitions for students and ensuring Hawai'i remains eligible for critical federal funding streams that support these programs.

Adult education is a primary engine for economic mobility. For many residents, obtaining a high school equivalency is the first step toward stability. The modern economy requires more than just a diploma; it requires integrated education and training.

The impact of adult education is most profound among our underserved populations. For individuals in the corrections system, education is the single most effective tool for reducing recidivism and ensuring successful reentry into society. Similarly, for our immigrant learners, English Language Acquisition (ELA) programs are the gateway to civic participation and economic self-sufficiency.

To continue our efforts on a national level, Hawai'i must speak the same "policy language" as the rest of the country. This bill ensures that our adult learners are not left behind by outdated terminology. It honors the hard work of our community schools while paving a clear, modernized path toward a more skilled and inclusive workforce.

Thank you for allowing me to testify.

Mahalo,

Ryan Mandado, EdD

