

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



ROY M. TAKUMI
CHAIRPERSON

**STATE OF HAWAII
BOARD OF EDUCATION
PAPA HO'ONA'AUAO**
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

House Committee on Education
Thursday, February 12, 2026
2:00 p.m.
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 309

Measure: House Bill 2344, Relating to School Facilities

Purpose of Measure:

Establishes a temporary, independent Public School Realignment and Closure Commission to develop and recommend a comprehensive package of school consolidations, realignments, and closures based on the federal Base Realignment and Closure model. Requires an expedited approval process by the Governor and Legislature. Appropriates moneys.

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

The Board of Education (Board) recognizes the intent of and approach proposed in HB2344 to optimize school facilities, and respectfully offers comments.

The Board agrees the legislation warrants further discussion. The Board also notes that the Department of Education has been steadfastly working on a process to address the downward trend in student enrollment projections – including conducting extensive stakeholder engagement in 2025 – and defers to the Department for specific details on this work.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify on behalf of the Board.



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: HB2344, RELATING TO SCHOOL FACILITIES.

Purpose of Bill: Establishes a temporary, independent Public School Realignment and Closure Commission to develop and recommend a comprehensive package of school consolidations, realignments, and closures based on the federal Base Realignment and Closure model. Requires an expedited approval process by the Governor and Legislature. Appropriates moneys.

Department's Position:

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) offers comments on House Bill (HB) 2344.

Department Approach on School Consolidation

Section 302A-1129, Hawaii Revised Statutes, authorizes the Board of Education (Board) to open and close schools. Chapter 8-38, Hawaii Administrative Rules (HAR), Consolidation of Public Schools, sets forth criteria and a process for closing schools, referred to as "consolidation."

The Department is in the process of school consolidations under the requirements of Chapter 8-38, HAR. The Department's approach to school consolidation prioritizes its commitment to student learning and equity. A core value of the process is to ensure that equitable access to resources and opportunities are available for all students, particularly those most vulnerable. The Department acknowledges the fiscal savings considerations that are examined in school consolidation processes, and seeks to balance the fiscal exercise alongside an examination of student opportunities and outcomes.

In alignment with Chapter 8-38, HAR, the Department developed a timeline and phased methodological approach to identifying clusters of schools to be recommended to be studied for potential consolidation. In March 2025, the Department presented to the Board a timeline and approach to conducting a school consolidation study, which began with extensive stakeholder feedback that took place between Fall 2024 to Summer 2025. This engagement included discussions with principals in each of the state's 15 complex areas, former leads and staff during previous school consolidations,

and experts and staff from other states that conducted school consolidations. There were common themes raised:

1. Concerns with the timeline and ensuring that teachers and staff would have ample time and opportunity to apply for transfers in the event their school was selected for consolidation, and to allow students and families ample transition time.
2. Maintaining a connection to the school upon its closure. Hawaii high school graduates, perhaps more than most states, have a strong connection to their schools - it is often part of their identity. Teachers, administrators, and staff also develop a strong connection to their schools. If a school were to close, people have expressed the desire either for something to commemorate the school, or for the school facility/property to be used for a community purpose.
3. Recognition that while there is a steady decline in enrollment statewide, there are areas where the population is growing and schools are running out of space to accommodate the need.

As a result of this feedback, the Department adjusted the timeline to identify schools for possible school consolidation studies in Spring-Summer 2027.

The Department also recognizes that in the past, school consolidation studies were very infrequent, the last one having taken place in 2011. The Department's current approach is to review schools by clusters and to incorporate this as a continuous process that is built into the Department's routines.

Recommendations and Considerations

If this bill is moved forward, the Department recommends the following:

1. Clarifying that the purpose of the Commission is specifically to evaluate schools for closure/consolidation.
2. Expertise of Commission members: The Department believes it is important that one or more individuals with educational administration experience be part of the nine member commission in order to provide expertise and insight on school operations and impacts of the school consolidation.
3. Timeline for implementation: The Department may need more time to implement recommendations from the commission. For example, it may take time to comply with appropriate collective bargaining agreements regarding impact to personnel.
4. Reviewing and clarifying subsection (b) of Section 4 of the bill, which may be in conflict with existing law, e.g., sections 302A-1151, 302A-1151.5, and 302A-1506, HRS, with regard to processes and authority related to the sale or lease of public school lands or facilities.

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

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



RIKI FUJITANI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Hawai'i School Facilities Authority

2759 S. KING STREET, ROOM H201
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

House Committee on Education

February 12, 2026
2:00 PM

Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 309

House Bill 2344, Relating to School Facilities

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

The Hawai'i School Facilities Authority (SFA) offers comments on House Bill 2344, which would establish a temporary, independent Public School Realignment and Closure Commission modeled after the federal Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process.

SFA was created to reimagine how public school facilities across Hawai'i are planned and delivered, with a focus on the efficient stewardship of public assets. In that context, HB 2344 is relevant to SFA's mission and to broader statewide efforts to align public infrastructure with Hawai'i's changing demographic and educational needs. While SFA board members and employees cannot serve on the commission contemplated by this measure, SFA is ready to serve as a technical resource.

As the bill notes, statewide public school enrollment has declined over time while the number of school facilities has continued to grow, resulting in underutilized campuses and operational inefficiencies.

The federal BRAC model referenced in the bill is notable, not because such decisions are easy, but because it recognizes how complex and politically sensitive they are. By assigning this responsibility to an independent commission, the model establishes a

structured, objective process that allows recommendations to be evaluated holistically, based on data and statewide needs, rather than on a school-by-school or district-by-district basis. HB 2344 applies this same principle to Hawai'i's public school system.

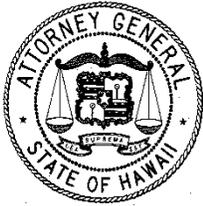
Should school closures occur as a result of this process, careful consideration of the future use of former school sites will be important. In some cases, these properties may continue to support educational functions; in others, adaptive reuse or redevelopment could allow the State, where appropriate, to address broader public needs, such as workforce housing or other compatible public uses.

To this end, SFA recommends changes to Section 4, subsection (b) of the bill (Page 8, Lines 1-6. Specifically, we recommend identifying a different agency (or agencies) with broader perspective and responsibility of the State's overall needs to take possession and control of the real property and to determine the best and highest use of the property for the benefit of the State and public.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Riki Fujitani
Executive Director



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. NO. 2344, RELATING TO SCHOOL FACILITIES.

BEFORE THE:

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

DATE: Thursday, February 12, 2026 **TIME:** 2:00 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 309

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Anne T. Horiuchi, Deputy Attorney General or Randall M. Wat,
Deputy Attorney General

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General (Department) provides the following comments.

The bill: (1) establishes a temporary, independent Public School Realignment and Closure Commission (Commission) to develop and recommend a comprehensive package of school consolidations, realignments, and closures based on the federal Base Realignment and Closure model; (2) requires an expedited approval process by the Governor and Legislature; and (3) appropriates moneys.

Commission Support

Subsection (e) of section 2 (page 4, lines 5-7) provides that "[t]he department of accounting and general services shall provide to the commission any administrative support it deems necessary to fulfill the duties of the commission."

It is unclear whether the term "it" at the end of line 6 refers to the Department of Accounting and General Services or the Commission. The Department recommends replacing "it" with the name of the entity being referred to.

Commission Reports and Governor Approval

Subsection (h) of section 2 (page 6, lines 5-9) provides:

(h) No later than November 15, 2027, the governor shall:

- (1) Approve or disapprove the commission's report in its entirety, without amendment; **or**

(2) Transmit the report, if approved, to the legislature for final consideration. If the governor does not approve or disapprove the report by the deadline, the report shall be deemed approved and shall be transmitted to the legislature for final consideration.

Paragraphs (1) and (2) are presented as separate alternatives, but it appears they are actions that would need to be taken together, so instead of the "or" on page 6, line 7, we recommend using "and."

There is a similar issue in section 2(h)(1) relating to the Commission's revised report. We recommend amending page 6, line 19, by replacing "or" with "and."

Closed School Properties

Subsection (b) of section 4 (page 8, lines 1-6) provides:

(b) Jurisdiction and control over any real property of a school closed pursuant to this Act shall be transferred to the school facilities authority for disposition. Any proceeds from the sale or lease of the property shall be deposited into the school facilities special fund established under section 302A-1706, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

The requirement to immediately transfer closed school properties to the School Facilities Authority (SFA) appears to conflict with section 302A-1151, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), which provides that buildings no longer used for school purposes are to be made available for use by the Department of Education or charter schools, pursuant to sections 302A-1151.5 and 302D-24, HRS. Under the same statutes, state lands, including any buildings thereon, are to be sold by the Department of Land and Natural Resources, upon the recommendation and approval of the Superintendent of Education.

Section 302A-1151.5, HRS, further provides that when the Department of Education considers whether to close a public school, it shall consider making the facilities available to charter schools and early learning programs, or any other purpose the Board deems appropriate.

If the intent of the Legislature is for the SFA to have the authority to sell closed school properties, the Department recommends amending sections 302A-1151 and 302A-1151.5, HRS, to align with this intent. If this is not the Legislature's intent, the Department recommends revising subsection (b) of section 4 to clarify the meaning of "disposition." We would be happy to assist the Committee with wording that provides this clarification.

Section Numbering

On page 7, line 17, there appears to be no "SECTION 3." The Department recommends re-numbering the sections beginning with this line.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this bill.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'AINA



KEITH A. REGAN
COMPTROLLER
KA LUNA HO'OMALU HANA LAULĀ

MEOH-LENG SILLIMAN
DEPUTY COMPTROLLER
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OMALU HANA LAULĀ

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING AND GENERAL SERVICES | KA 'OIHANA LOIHELU A LAWELAWÉ LAULĀ
P.O. BOX 119, HONOLULU, HAWAII 'I 96810-0119

WRITTEN TESTIMONY
OF
KEITH A. REGAN, COMPTROLLER
DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING AND GENERAL SERVICES
TO THE
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

FEBRUARY 12, 2026, 2:00 P.M.
CONFERENCE ROOM 309 AND VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE, STATE CAPITOL

H.B. 2344

RELATING TO SCHOOL FACILITIES.

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on H.B. 2344.

The Department of Accounting and General Services (DAGS) offers **comments** for H.B. 2344. This measure establishes a temporary, independent Public School Realignment and Closure Commission to develop and recommend a comprehensive package of school consolidations, realignments, and closures based on federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission to develop and recommend a comprehensive package of school consolidations, realignments, and closures based on the federal Base Realignment and Closure model. Requires and expedited approval process by the Governor and Legislature.

We would recommend that the Public School Realignment and Closure Commission be placed within the Hawai'i State Department of Education (DOE) under HRS §26-12 because its responsibilities which include school consolidations, realignments, and closures are fundamentally educational decisions that require alignment with statewide academic goals and student needs. The DOE oversees public school operations and policy, ensuring these actions are informed by instructional priorities and community engagement. In contrast, the Department of Accounting and General Services (DAGS) under HRS §26-6 focuses on administrative and infrastructure support, which does not encompass the educational considerations essential to this proposed commission's work. Positioning the commission within the DOE promotes coherence, accountability, and trust in shaping Hawai'i's public education system.

We are also concerned that, should this responsibility be placed within DAGS, the \$100,000 in funding may be insufficient for a commission tasked with such a comprehensive and statewide review of public school facilities within the proposed timeframe. The commission's responsibilities include developing criteria, conducting public hearings, analyzing extensive data, and preparing a detailed report with justifications and cost estimates. These tasks typically require significant resources, including hiring experts, conducting site visits, and ensuring public engagement. Additional funding may be necessary to ensure the commission can meet its deadline and deliver a meaningful report.

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



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
House of Representatives
Committee on Education

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 12, 2026

H.B. 2344 – RELATING TO SCHOOL FACILITIES

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO opposes the intent of H.B. 2344 which establishes a temporary, independent Public School Realignment and Closure Commission to develop and recommend a comprehensive package of school consolidations, realignments, and closures based on the federal Base Realignment and Closure model.

The Board of Education (BOE) has long maintained a clear, community-centered framework for school consolidation. HAR Chapter 8-38 defines the conditions that trigger a consolidation study, requires procedures and guidelines for analysis, and mandates public notification and hearings to ensure meaningful community input before any decision is made. In fact, the Department of Education is already implementing a statewide consolidation review under HAR Chapter 8-38, outlining its methodology and factors to be considered such as enrollment trends, conditions of school facilities, and community impacts. After internal discussions, the DOE will present their findings to the BOE so this confirms that the existing BOE policy and DOE process are adequate.

The creation of a temporary commission with an expedited “all or nothing” vote would duplicate and conflict with the already established and transparent process. The federal Base Realignment and Closure model may be fitting for military base planning but it runs counter to the BOE’s established requirement for community hearings and engagement. A temporary commission detached from the existing BOE’s process risks decisions that are less responsive to the local educational needs of our single statewide school district made up of many communities that are geographically isolated. A one-size-fits-all efficiency model risks imposing school closures and consolidations where viable alternatives are not realistically accessible to families and school employees.

Lastly, a temporary commission making permanent decisions creates long-term risks without continuity beyond 2028. This measure offers no detailed transition plan to ensure instructional continuity, no mechanism to guarantee savings are reinvested in high-need communities, and no clear process for responsibly repurposing closed campuses.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on H.B. 2344.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director



UNITED PUBLIC WORKERS

AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2026**

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Rep. Justin Woodson, Chair
Rep. Trish La Chica, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 12, 2026, 2:00 PM
Conference Room 309 & Videoconference

Re: Testimony on HB2344 – RELATING TO SCHOOL FACILITIES

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

The United Public Workers, AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO (“UPW”) is the exclusive bargaining representative for approximately 14,000 public employees, which includes blue collar, non-supervisory employees in Bargaining Unit 1 and institutional, health, and correctional employees in Bargaining Unit 10, in the State of Hawaii and various counties.

UPW is **opposed** to HB1783, which establishes a temporary, independent Public School Realignment and Closure Commission to develop and recommend a comprehensive package of school consolidations, realignments, and closures based on the federal Base Realignment and Closure (“BRAC”) model. This bill also requires an expedited approval process by the Governor and Legislature.

This bill proposes a process to establish a comprehensive package of school consolidations, realignments, and closures based on a federal BRAC model. We are greatly concerned with applying the BRAC process to determine school consolidation, realignment, and closure. While the primary drivers for BRAC are operational readiness and savings, job loss and impact are part of its evaluation criteria. Given the limited scope of expertise required, on Page 3, Lines 15-21, of commission appointees, expertise in public administration or labor relations is excluded. Leaving these decisions to individuals without an understanding of public employment and their challenges would be detrimental.

If the committee is inclined to pass this measure, we would ask that it expand the fields of expertise in this section.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

HEADQUARTERS

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HB-2344

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 9:17:47 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

2344 HB RELATING TO SCHOOL FACILITIES.