



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

Date: 03/03/2026

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 308 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: FIN

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB2427, HD1, RELATING TO UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH.

Purpose of Bill: Entitles unaccompanied homeless youth, including runaway youth, with the rights, as provided by the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987, to immediate enrollment in school, full participation in school activities, and access to comparable school and educational services provided to other students. Establishes a student-centered, safety-first protocol for unaccompanied homeless youth enrolling in or attending school. Permits unaccompanied homeless youth to provisionally enroll in school without providing immunization records. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD2)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports HB2427, HD2. This measure seeks to align state policies with the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act by ensuring that unaccompanied homeless youth, including runaway youth, are afforded all rights guaranteed under federal law. The Department recognizes the critical importance of educational access and stability for all students, particularly those experiencing homelessness, and this bill directly addresses a significant barrier to that access.

The Department commends the legislature for its recognition of the protections afforded to unaccompanied homeless youth under the McKinney-Vento Act, which include immediate enrollment, full participation in all school activities, and access to necessary support services without the requirement of parental presence or traditional documentation. Establishing a new subpart within Chapter 302A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, will codify these rights and create a clear, student-centered protocol for enrollment and support. Specifically, the bill's provisions for a student-centered notification protocol, which prioritizes notification to the office of youth services and the complex area homeless liaison over immediate notification to law enforcement or parents, are crucial for ensuring the safety and well-being of these vulnerable youth.

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

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



LEANNE GILLESPIE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
LUNA HO'OKELE

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STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
OFFICE OF YOUTH SERVICES
Ke'ena Lawelawe 'Ōpio
1010 Richards Street, Suite 314
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

March 2, 2026

TO: The Honorable Representative Chris Todd, Chair
The Honorable Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Leanne Gillespie, Executive Director

SUBJECT: HB 2427 HD2, RELATING TO UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH

Hearing: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 @ 2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 308, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Office of Youth Services (OYS) appreciates the intent of this bill, offers comments, and requests amendments. OYS defers to the Department of Education (DOE).

PURPOSE: The purpose of this bill is to entitle unaccompanied homeless youth, including runaway youth, with the rights, as provided by the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987, to immediate enrollment in school, full participation in school activities, and access to comparable school and educational services provided to other students. Established a student-centered, safety-first protocol for unaccompanied homeless youth enrolling in or attending school.

This bill aims to ensure homeless children and youth, including runaways, have access to education through the Department of Education. OYS defers to the DOE on how it maintains

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AGENCY

and facilitates access to Hawaii's public schools by students experiencing homelessness or who are runaway.

For the committee's information, other than youth committed to the Hawaii Youth Correctional Facility, OYS does not provide direct services to youth. OYS contracts with community-based organizations to provide an array of services for juvenile justice prevention, rehabilitation, and treatment. OYS does not employ social workers or case managers, nor does it have the current capacity to perform such services.

Through decades of juvenile justice reform in Hawaii, including Act 201, SLH 2014, Hawaii has established systems and processes to provide diversion and supportive services to runaway youth. Partnerships with community-based organizations help reduce youth distrust of government, build trust, and increase access to needed services. These contracted services may be accessed by the DOE's students and accept referrals by DOE staff, including teachers, counselors, and liaisons.

Notably, as a juvenile justice agency, DOE's notification of a runaway youth to OYS, as proposed in this measure, would trigger a call to law enforcement and the Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Services. As drafted, it is unclear what the legislature's intent is regarding notice to OYS.

As such, OYS respectfully requests removal of language as it relates to the Office of Youth Services, specifically:

- Page 7, line 3 ~~"(2) The office of youth services in cases involving students who are runaway youth."~~
- Page 8, lines 10-12 ~~"The department, in collaboration with the office of youth services, shall adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91 necessary to carry out this subpart."~~

If the legislature is moving towards expanding OYS's statutory responsibilities to include providing case management services directly to youth, OYS will need to conduct a

House Committee on Finance
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feasibility study to assess current system responses and laws and develop a plan outlining statutory changes and resources needed for OYS to provide such services. OYS respectfully requests two years and an appropriation of \$300,000 to contract a consultant to conduct this feasibility study and engage with current stakeholders.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.



Chair Todd
Vice Chair Takenouchi
House Committee on Finance

Tuesday, March 3rd, 2026
2:00 PM

**TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB2427 RELATING TO UNACCOMPANIED
HOMELESS YOUTH**

Aloha Members of the House Committee on Finance.

The Hawai‘i State Youth Commission was first created through Act 106 in 2018, “to advise the governor and legislature on the effects of legislative policies, needs, assessments, priorities, programs, and budgets concerning the youth of the State.” The Hawai‘i State Youth Commission’s Education legislative committee is in strong support of House Bill 2427.

Hawai‘i’s young people deserve stability, safety, and access to opportunity, especially those facing housing insecurity without the support of a parent or guardian. This measure strengthens protections for unaccompanied homeless youth by aligning state practice with the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and ensuring that our most vulnerable students are not pushed further into crisis by bureaucratic barriers.

Unaccompanied homeless youth often face impossible choices. Many are couch-surfing, living in cars, staying in shelters, or fleeing unsafe home environments. For these students, school is often the only stable place in their lives. It provides not only education, but also meals, trusted adults, peer connection, and a pathway to long-term self-sufficiency.

Yet despite federal protections, gaps in implementation can still create fear and confusion. Requiring parental presence, guardianship documentation, or immediate immunization records can unintentionally delay enrollment. Mandating automatic notification of law enforcement or guardians can discourage youth from seeking help at all. This bill makes clear that housing instability or lack of documentation cannot be used to deny or delay a student’s right to learn.

Importantly, this measure establishes a student-centered, safety-first protocol. Instead of defaulting to punitive responses, it prioritizes trauma-informed engagement and connects youth to school liaisons and the Office of Youth Services. It recognizes that some students may be fleeing unsafe or abusive situations, while others may need support with family reconnection. In both cases, the youth's physical and emotional safety remains paramount.

Education is one of the strongest protective factors against long-term homelessness, involvement in the justice system, and chronic poverty. By guaranteeing immediate enrollment, full participation in school activities, access to transportation and services, and provisional attendance while immunization records are secured, this bill reinforces the principle that no young person should lose their education because they lost their housing.

As a Commission tasked with uplifting youth voices across Hawai'i, we believe this measure affirms a simple but powerful truth: young people cannot thrive if they are excluded from the very systems designed to support them. H.B.2427 ensures that even in moments of instability, our schools remain open doors, not additional obstacles.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

The Hawai'i State Youth Commission
hawaiiistateyc@gmail.com

To: House Committee on Finance
Re: HB 2427 HD 2-Relating to Unaccompanied Homeless Youth
Hawai'i State Capitol room 303 & Via Videoconference March
3, 2026, 2:00 PM

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Respected Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, I respectfully submit testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT for HB 2427 HD2**.

HB 2427 HD2 strengthens protections and clarifies processes to ensure that unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness can enroll in and fully participate in school without delay. For students navigating housing instability without a parent or guardian, school is often the only consistent and stabilizing environment in their lives. Ensuring immediate enrollment and equal access to services is not only a federal requirement under the McKinney-Vento Act, it is a fiscally responsible investment in long-term stability.

From a Finance perspective, this bill represents a preventative, cost-effective strategy. When unaccompanied homeless youth are unable to enroll promptly or access school supports, the consequences often escalate—higher rates of chronic absenteeism, course failure, disengagement, and ultimately dropout. These outcomes carry significant long-term costs to the state, including increased reliance on public assistance, higher health and social service expenditures, and involvement with the justice system. Supporting educational continuity early reduces the likelihood of these more expensive downstream impacts.

Educational stability is one of the strongest protective factors against long-term homelessness. When students remain connected to school, they have access to meals, counseling, transportation assistance, and trusted adults who can help them navigate complex systems. HB 2427 HD2 ensures that administrative barriers do not stand in the way of these critical supports.

Importantly, this measure aligns with Hawai'i's broader investments in education, workforce development, and homelessness prevention. The state has committed substantial resources toward addressing homelessness across the continuum. Ensuring that unaccompanied youth can maintain uninterrupted access to education maximizes the return on those investments by focusing on prevention and long-term self-sufficiency.

At its core, HB 2427 reinforces Hawai'i's commitment to equity, recognizing that students facing the greatest instability require clear and consistent systems to protect their right to learn. Supporting these youth today reduces future fiscal strain and strengthens our communities tomorrow.

HCAN Speaks! respectfully urges the Committee on Finance to please **PASS HB 2427, HD2**.

HB-2427-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/27/2026 8:36:51 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Rainbow Family 808	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We support HB2427. Please pass this bill.

HB-2427-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 11:23:24 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sonia Blackiston	Hawaii Youth Services Network	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Finance Committee members,

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN) strongly supports HB 2427, HD2, which entitles unaccompanied homeless youth, including runaway youth, with the rights, as provided by the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987, to immediate enrollment in school, full participation in school activities and access to comparable school and educational services provided to other students. HYSN strongly urges the finance committee to support this measure which offers much needed support and access for the unaccompanied homeless and runaway youth populations.

Mahalo,

Sonia Blackiston

HYSN Executive Director

Letter in Support of HB2427

February 27, 2026

To: House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness
Hawaii State Legislature
Hawaii State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: Strong Support for HB2427 HD1 – Rights and Protections for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

Aloha Chair Kapela, Vice Chair Amato, and Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Ryan K. Gomes, and I am a resident of Honolulu. I write to you today as a concerned private citizen in strong support of HB2427 HD1, which entitles unaccompanied homeless youth, including runaway youth, to the rights provided by the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and establishes a student-centered, safety-first protocol for their enrollment in and attendance at school.

The Invisible Crisis: Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

Among the homeless population, unaccompanied youth—teenagers and young people who are experiencing homelessness without parents or guardians—are among the most vulnerable and most overlooked. These young people may have run away from abusive homes, aged out of foster care, been kicked out by their families, or found themselves on their own due to family breakdown, mental health crises, or other traumatic circumstances.

Unlike homeless families with children, unaccompanied youth have no adult advocate to help them navigate systems, enroll in school, or access services. They often lack the documentation schools traditionally require—birth certificates, immunization records, proof of residency, or parental consent forms. As a result, many are turned away from education entirely, left to survive on the streets without the stability, support, or hope that school can provide.

HB2427 HD1 addresses this crisis by ensuring that unaccompanied homeless youth have the same right to education as any other student and that schools have clear protocols for enrolling and supporting them without the barriers that currently keep them out.

Why HB2427 HD1 is Critical

This bill protects unaccompanied homeless youth by:

- **Guaranteeing their rights under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act**, which requires that homeless students, including unaccompanied youth, have access to free, appropriate public education and be enrolled immediately, even without the documents or parental involvement that schools typically require.

- **Establishing student-centered, safety-first protocols** that prioritize the well-being, safety, and educational access of unaccompanied youth, ensuring that schools focus on helping these students rather than creating administrative barriers.
- **Removing enrollment obstacles** such as lack of documentation, proof of residency, immunization records, or parental consent, which often prevent unaccompanied youth from accessing education.
- **Providing clarity for schools and educators** on how to serve this population legally and effectively, ensuring that staff understand their obligations under federal law and state policy.
- **Ensuring continuity and stability** for youth who are already facing immense challenges, by keeping them connected to education—often their only source of structure, support, and hope.

Who This Bill Benefits

HB2427 HD1 is designed to benefit the most vulnerable young people in our state—unaccompanied homeless youth who have nowhere to go, no one to advocate for them, and no clear path forward.

- **Unaccompanied homeless youth and runaways** gain the legal right to enroll in school and access education without the documentation or parental involvement they cannot provide.
- **Schools and educators** receive clear guidance and legal protection when serving unaccompanied youth, reducing confusion and ensuring compliance with federal law.
- **The community** benefits when these young people remain in school rather than falling into deeper crisis, criminalization, or exploitation on the streets.

This is not a bill that benefits corporations, special interests, or government bureaucracies. It is a direct protection for young people who are surviving on their own and who deserve the opportunity to continue their education despite their circumstances.

The Stakes: Education as a Lifeline

For unaccompanied homeless youth, school is not just about academics—it is a lifeline. It is a place where they can access meals, healthcare, counseling, and caring adults. It is a place where they can maintain friendships, pursue goals, and envision a future beyond survival. It is often the only structure and stability in their lives.

When we allow these young people to be turned away from school because they lack a parent's signature or a piece of paper, we are not just denying them an education—we are abandoning them entirely. We are telling them that they do not matter, that their futures are not worth protecting, and that they are on their own.

HB2427 HD1 rejects that outcome. It affirms that every young person in Hawai'i, regardless of their housing situation or family circumstances, has the right to an education. It ensures that schools are welcoming, supportive places for unaccompanied youth, not gatekeepers that turn them away.

Addressing Concerns

Some may worry that allowing unaccompanied youth to enroll without parental consent could create safety or legal issues. But HB2427 HD1 is designed as a student-centered, safety-first protocol. Schools will still work to locate parents or guardians when appropriate and to ensure that youth are safe. The difference is that lack of parental involvement will no longer be a barrier to enrollment or attendance.

Federal law already requires schools to serve unaccompanied homeless youth. HB2427 HD1 simply codifies that requirement in state law and provides clear guidance to schools on how to comply. This is not a new obligation—it is clarification and enforcement of an existing one.

Others may worry about the cost of serving this population. But the cost of not serving them is far greater. When unaccompanied youth are denied education, they are far more likely to experience exploitation, criminalization, substance abuse, and long-term poverty. Keeping them in school is the most cost-effective intervention we can provide.

Conclusion

HB2427 HD1 is a necessary, compassionate, and legally sound measure that ensures unaccompanied homeless youth have access to the education they deserve. It removes barriers, provides clarity, and affirms that every young person in Hawai‘i—no matter how vulnerable or isolated—has the right to learn, grow, and build a future.

These young people are not throwaway kids. They are survivors who deserve our support, our protection, and our commitment to their success. HB2427 HD1 ensures that the door to education remains open for them, no matter what.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB2427 HD1.

Mahalo nui for your commitment to the most vulnerable youth in our community and for ensuring that no young person is left behind because of their circumstances.

Me ka ha‘aha‘a,

Ryan K. Gomes
Honolulu, Hawai‘i

To: Rep. Lisa Marten, Chair
Rep. Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee

From: Melelatai Kin

Date: 2/27/2026

RE: SUPPORT for HB2427 HD2, Relating to Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

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

My name is Melelatai Kin, and I am a resident of Pepeekeo, Hawaii. Currently I am a non-traditional student pursuing my Bachelor's in Social Work at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. I am writing to express my **strong support for HB2427 HD2**, which codifies essential educational protections for our state's most vulnerable youths. This bill is a critical necessity to ensure that Hawaii's most vulnerable students are not forced to choose between their safety and their education.

Unaccompanied youths often flee crisis situations without access to birth certificates or medical records. By mandating immediate enrollment, this bill safeguards a student's right to learn, preventing administrative red tape from turning a temporary housing crisis into a permanent academic failure.

Every school move costs a student months of academic progress. By codifying the right to remain in their school of origin and providing transportation, this bill provides the only stable environment many of these students have. This stability is the most effective tool we have to break the cycle of generational homelessness. It is far more cost effective for the State of Hawaii to support a student through school than to bear the long-term social and economic costs of an adult who lacked the opportunity to finish their education.

I respectfully urge the Committee to **pass HB2427 HD2** to ensure Hawaii's youth have the stability they need to succeed in adulthood.

Mahalo for your time and for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.

Sincerely,

Melelatai Kin

To: Representative Chris Todd, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Committee on Finance

From: Veronica Moore, Individual Citizen

Date: March 1, 2026

RE: House Bill 2427 HD2
Measure Title: RELATING TO UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH.
Report Title: Department of Education; Office of Youth Services; Unaccompanied
Homeless Youth; Enrollment; Provisional Attendance

To All Concerned,

My name is Veronica Moore and I support House Bill 2427 HD2. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Veronica M. Moore

HB-2427-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 1:38:25 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Juliet Connel	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair and members of the committee,

I am Juliet Connel and I am in strong favor of HB2427 believe that everyone should deserve an education despite there finiacial status and home situation. In addition everyone should have a safe environment to learn even if a parent or gardian is not present. I also believe that this bill protects students personal rights. I strongly encourage you guys to vote for HB2427. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,

Juliet Connel

Judith F. Clark

48-218 Kamehameha Highway

808-499-9966

Judithforceclark@gmail.com

Kaneohe, Hawaii 96744

March 3, 2026

To: Representative Chris Todd, Chair,
And members of the Committee on Finance

Testimony in Support of HB 2428 HD 2 Relating to Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

As a community advocate, a homeless youth service provider for 25 years,, and a person with lived experience of youth homelessness, I strongly support HB 2427 HD 2.

Unaccompanied homeless are the most vulnerable and least recognized segment of Hawaii's homeless population. They experience many challenges and barriers in obtaining educational services. The supports and services mandated by the federal McKinney-Vento Act and implemented in Hawaii Schools through the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Office are critically important to enable unaccompanied homeless youth to participate in school.

This bill will ensure that unaccompanied can enroll in school, participate in activities, and obtain transportation, meals, and supplies. This bill provides a safety net for our most vulnerable children and youth.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Judith F. Clark, MPH

HB-2427-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 11:10:46 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alencia Taylor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

March 3, 2026

Aloha, My name is Alencia Taylor and I'm in strong support of HB2427 HD2, which protects the rights of unaccompanied homeless youth by ensuring immediate school enrollment, full participation in school activities, and access to essential educational services. This bill prioritizes student safety and stability during extremely vulnerable times in a young person's life. Unaccompanied homeless youth often face barriers to enrolling in school because they lack required documents like proof of residency or immunization records. This bill aligns state policy with the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act by guaranteeing immediate enrollment. Research consistently shows that school stability improves graduation rates and reduces the risk of long-term poverty for homeless youth. HB2427 HD2 establishes a student-centered, safety-first protocol. Many runaway or homeless youth may be fleeing unsafe or abusive situations. By focusing on safety and confidentiality, schools can better protect these students rather than unintentionally placing them at further risk. Allowing provisional enrollment ensures that students are not denied education simply because they do not have immediate access to medical paperwork. This prevents gaps in learning while still allowing schools to follow up appropriately. Education should never be delayed due to circumstances outside a young person's control. In conclusion, HB2427 HD2 ensures that some of Hawaii's most vulnerable youth are not left behind. By guaranteeing immediate access to education, prioritizing safety, and removing unnecessary enrollment barriers, this bill provides stability, opportunity, and hope. I respectfully urge the Committee on Finance to pass this measure.