



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

Date: 02/19/2026

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: EDN

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB2436, HD1, RELATING TO ARTS INTEGRATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Purpose of Bill: Establishes within the Department of Education arts integration coordinator or specialist positions to support fine arts education and arts integration in public schools statewide. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education respectfully provides comments for HB 2436 H.D. 1.

The Department of Education values a well-rounded education and recognizes that the fine arts are essential to the "whole-child" development of Hawaii's students. The Department is very appreciative of the Legislature's efforts to expand opportunities for creative expression and high-quality fine arts instruction across our islands.

Currently, the Department's Fine Arts program, covering Dance, Media Arts, Music, Theatre, and Visual Arts, is overseen by one Fine Arts Specialist and one State Office Teacher who support 168 elementary schools and 90 secondary schools. While the new positions across the islands would be ideal and desired, knowing there are fiscal constraints facing the state and a finite source of funds, the Department supports the intent of the bill provided that funding does not impact the Department's Board-approved budget requests.

The Department remains committed to do all that is possible within given resources and community partnerships, to continue to promote the Fine Arts program in our schools, integration of Fine Arts with other content areas, provide professional development, and increase opportunities for students across the state.

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

Testimony of KAREN EWALD, Executive Director
State Foundation on Culture and the Arts

Before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2026 Conference Room 309 at 2:00PM

HOUSE BILL 2436_HD1
RELATING TO
ARTS INTEGRATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS



HAWAII
STATE FOUNDATION on
CULTURE and the ARTS

No. 1 Capitol District Building
250 South Hotel Street
Second Floor
Honolulu, HI 96813

Governor
Josh Green, M.D.

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sfca.hawaii.gov

Dear Chair Woodson and members of the Committee,

The State Foundation on Culture and the Arts (SFCA), is dedicated to the promotion, perpetuation, and preservation of culture and the arts in Hawai'i.

SFCA **SUPPORTS** H.B. 2436_HD1 which establishes within the Department of Education arts integration coordinator positions and arts integration specialist positions to support fine arts education and arts integration in public schools statewide. Appropriates funds.

Arts Integration Specialists established in the Department of Education would provide guidance for educators in implementation of arts integration standards in curriculum, and establishing an Arts Integration Specialist in a complex area level would give educators and the administration a dedicated contact who can help support these needs.

Additionally, the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts' Artists in the Schools program recipients would benefit greatly from this measure. Arts Integration Specialists would be a "point person" for Teaching Artists on the SFCA roster preparing to draft a grant proposal for a residency. An Arts Integration Specialist can also be a source of knowledge and connectivity for arts integration and youth arts experiences both inside and outside of the classroom for the students, administration, educators, parents and guardians.

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



Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Maki Morinoue, and I am testifying on behalf of HULI PAC. HULI PAC is an organization whose mission is to endorse and support candidates and office holders of integrity who serve the 'āina and people of Hawai'i Island.

HULI PAC is in strong support of **HB2436**.

Arts and culture are not extras in education — they are essential life skills. Research consistently shows that students engaged in arts-integrated learning demonstrate stronger critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving skills. These are the very capacities our keiki need to thrive in an increasingly complex, uncertain, and rapidly changing world.

HB2436 recognizes what educators, families, and communities already know: arts integration strengthens whole-child development. Creative expression improves student engagement, supports academic achievement across subjects, and deepens cultural connections. For many students, the arts are how learning finally *clicks* — especially for English learners, multilingual students, and those who struggle in traditional classroom settings.

Just as importantly, arts and culture are healing. Our children are carrying unprecedented levels of stress, trauma, and anxiety. Music, movement, storytelling, visual art, and cultural practices provide safe, evidence-based pathways for emotional regulation, resilience, and connection. These practices help students process grief, build empathy, and feel a sense of belonging — all of which are foundational to mental health and learning.

HB2436 thoughtfully invests in arts integration coordinators across our islands, strengthening partnerships with local artists and cultural practitioners and aligning with the Department of Education's Nā Hopena A'ō framework. This approach honors 'ike kupuna, cultural identity, and place-based learning while equipping teachers with practical tools to integrate the arts into everyday instruction.

By passing HB2436, we are not only supporting education — we are investing in a more innovative, compassionate, and culturally grounded society. We are giving our keiki the tools to think critically, feel deeply, heal collectively, and lead with empathy.

Please support HB2436. Our children, our culture, and our future depend on it.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify.

Maki Morinoue

HULI PAC, Hawai'i Island



SACRED LIGHT 'OHANA

February 18th, 2026

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued service to our communities. I respectfully submit testimony in **strong support of HB2436 HD1.**

My name is La'akea Ching. I am a Hawai'i-based creative producer and nonprofit leader working in workforce development and cultural programming that connects local creatives with education, industry pathways, and community-centered storytelling initiatives. Through my professional experience both in Hawai'i and beyond the islands, I have seen how access to structured creative mentorship and arts education can meaningfully shape student confidence, cultural connection, and long-term career pathways. In my own journey, accessing these opportunities required leaving Hawai'i to find the infrastructure and professional networks that are not yet consistently available at home.

In my work beyond the islands, I had the opportunity to produce No Label Academy, a music business curriculum and artist development accelerator hosted at Harvard University, focused on preparing Indigenous emerging artists with real-world industry knowledge and professional pathways while supporting culturally grounded creative expression. Witnessing the impact that structured creative education and mentorship had on participating students reinforced my belief that access to these types of programs can be transformative. Measures like HB2436 HD1 help ensure that similar opportunities can exist locally, allowing future generations to develop creative skills and professional pathways while remaining rooted in Hawai'i.

Much of my work back home is dedicated to bringing that level of exposure and opportunity directly to our communities. Establishing dedicated arts integration coordinator and specialist positions within the Department of Education creates the structure needed to consistently connect schools with artists, cultural practitioners, and community-based programs statewide. These roles help ensure students in Hawai'i are exposed to creative learning frameworks comparable to those shaping industries globally, allowing our youth to remain competitive, culturally grounded, and prepared for an increasingly interconnected creative economy.

By making arts integration a coordinated and sustained component of the education system, this measure strengthens cultural connection, supports diverse learning styles, and builds early awareness of creative career pathways while reinforcing Hawai'i's unique cultural identity. These roles help ensure arts-based opportunities are not isolated initiatives, but lasting components of how students learn, express themselves, and prepare for the future.

Mahalo again for your time and thoughtful consideration of this important measure. I respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB2436 HD1.

With appreciation,

La'akea Ching

Founder & Executive Director



HOUSE BILL 2436, HD1, RELATING TO ARTS INTEGRATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

FEBRUARY 19, 2026 · EDN HEARING

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus supports HB 2436, HD1, relating to arts integration in public schools, which establishes within the Department of Education arts integration coordinator positions and arts integration specialist positions to support fine arts education and arts integration in public schools statewide.

This measure recognizes arts education as a central part of a well-rounded education and aligns with growing evidence that arts participation fosters academic success, socio-emotional growth, and equitable learning outcomes for students. Research shows that arts education is positively associated with key indicators of academic achievement.

A major study sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts found that students who participate regularly in arts learning demonstrate higher levels of academic engagement, greater school attendance, and enhanced writing skills. According to the National Endowment for the Arts' "The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth" report, low-income students with sustained arts involvement show statistically significant gains on academic measures compared with peers who have limited arts exposure, including stronger school grades and greater civic engagement.

Additionally, a large, randomized study conducted in Houston public schools demonstrated that increased access to structured arts learning was linked with reduced disciplinary incidents, improved writing performance, and other meaningful academic outcomes. These findings highlight that arts education not only enriches students' creative expression, but also supports core academic skills such as literacy, communication, and critical thinking.

Arts-integrated instruction—where arts experiences are deeply connected to core academic content—further amplifies learning growth and student engagement. A research synthesis commissioned by The Wallace Foundation, encompassing multiple studies on arts integration, found that when arts learning is intentionally integrated with subjects like math, science, and language arts, students show measurable improvements in understanding complex concepts and applying knowledge in real-world contexts.

These benefits extend beyond standardized measurements. Arts education is associated with improved attendance and school climates, which correlate with long-term academic success. Students engaged in the arts report stronger connections to school, higher motivation to learn, and greater resilience, important outcomes for students who may struggle in traditional classrooms or face barriers outside of school.

In Hawai'i, supporting arts integration responds to local educational priorities and community values. The Hawai'i State Department of Education's Fine Arts standards emphasize that the arts support critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication — competencies aligned with college, career, and civic readiness. Integrating arts learning across the curriculum not only cultivates cultural expression, but also fosters a more equitable and inclusive learning environment for students of all backgrounds.

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



Rep. Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Rep. Trish La Chica, Vice Chair
Committee on Education

Thursday, February 19, 2026
2:00PM Conference Room 309

RE: HB2436 HD1 Arts Integration in Public Schools - Support

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

The Chamber of Sustainable Commerce supports HB2436 HD1, which establishes arts integration coordinator or specialist positions within the Department of Education and appropriates funding to strengthen fine arts education statewide. CSC represents more than 580 small businesses, sole proprietors, and entrepreneurs across Hawai'i committed to a triple bottom line: people, planet, and prosperity.

Arts education strengthens student engagement, cultural connection, whole-child development, and learning across subject areas, including STEM. Establishing one arts integration coordinator on each of the islands of O'ahu, Maui, Kaua'i, and Hawai'i Island ensures equitable, island-based support for schools and educators.

This measure is an investment in both educational and economic infrastructure. Arts integration deepens partnerships between schools, local artists, cultural practitioners, and community arts organizations—many of whom are sole proprietors, entrepreneurs and/or small business owners. Strengthening the Artists in the Schools program and providing professional learning, coaching, and technical assistance to educators helps scale and sustain high-quality arts learning statewide.

Investing in arts integration increases our communities' future creative capacity. Students who develop creative confidence, cultural identity, collaboration, and problem-solving skills are better prepared to become innovators, entrepreneurs, and community leaders. The appropriation for four full-time positions is a strategic investment in Hawai'i's long-term creative economy and stronger community outcomes.

Hawaii Legislative Council Members

Joell Edwards
Wainiha Country Market
Hanalei

Russell Ruderman
Island Naturals
Hilo/Kona

Dr. Andrew Johnson
Niko Niko Family Dentistry
Honolulu

Robert H. Pahia
Hawaii Taro Farm
Wailuku

Maile Meyer
Honolulu

Tina Wildberger
Kihei Ice
Kihei

L. Malu Shizue Miki
Abundant Life Natural Foods
Hilo

Chamber of
Sustainable Commerce
808.445.7606
P.O. Box 22394
Honolulu, HI 96823

HB-2436-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 10:18:30 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Taylor Deskin	Aloha Theatre	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Taylor Deskin, and I am a community member from Kealahou. I am writing in strong support of HB2436.

As an educator, I have witnessed firsthand how our keiki benefit from having arts education in their schools. **Performing arts education supports intellectual, social, and emotional growth, and serves to educate the whole child.**

The work ahead of us—transitioning toward creative, collaborative, and multidisciplinary environments—is a serious undertaking that requires robust support. Establishing Department of Education arts integration specialist positions is a critical step in preparing our keiki for the future. Arts integration is not a luxury; it is an essential tool for student success, emotional intelligence, and cultural preservation in Hawai‘i.

Please pass HB2436 to ensure our schools are places of growth, collaboration and creativity.

Mahalo, Taylor Deskin

HB-2436-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 5:41:44 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy Redfeather	Ka Ohana O Na Pua	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I have lived in Hawai'i for 50 years and have been involved with some form of education for that period of time. Hawai'i has always had great success with it's arts programs, they seem to come and go. But remember that when the children are connected to the arts their academics rises. Testing and rote memory is only one small aspect of learning. When the arts are integrated into the classroom life becomes richer, all students profit from their connection to this aspect of learning and the world. Full Support for reinstating this kind of program. Mahalo!

HB-2436-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 5:24:38 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/19/2026 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

2436 HB RELATING TO ARTS INTEGRATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

HB-2436-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 7:42:30 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Miho Morinoue	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Miho Morinoue, and I am a community member from the ahupua‘a of Holualoa. I currently serve as the Program Director for the Donkey Mill Art Center. I am writing in strong support of HB2436.

Having worked in the arts education sector for over 20 years, I have seen firsthand how the arts transform a child's ability to learn, connect, and express themselves through multidisciplinary education. At the Donkey Mill Art Center, our programs integrate science, culture, and the arts as an integral part of K–5 education. We believe it is our collective kuleana to support a healthy society by strengthening our education systems through student engagement, cultural connection, and whole-child development.

The work ahead of us—transitioning from specialized, siloed education toward creative, collaborative, and multidisciplinary environments—is a serious undertaking that requires robust support. Establishing Department of Education arts integration specialist positions to support fine arts and arts integration statewide is a critical step. These specialists will help transition Hawai‘i’s public schools into a future-ready system, placing us as a global exemplar in education and better preparing our keiki for the challenges of the 21st century.

Arts integration is not a luxury; it is an essential tool for student success, emotional intelligence, and cultural preservation in Hawai‘i. Please pass HB2436 to ensure our schools are places of growth, imagination, and holistic learning.

Mahalo,

Miho Morinoue

Program Director, Donkey Mill Art Center

HB-2436-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 9:03:24 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Arnold Wong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

*My name is **Arnold Wong** and I am a community member from **Kailua-Kona, Hawaii**. I am writing in **strong support of HB2436**.*

*As an **Art Teacher at Kuleana Education Academy, and past DOE schools; Honaunau, Ho’okenna, Konawaena Elementary and Middle school, Ehunui Emersion, SKEA, & Donkeymill Art Center, it is vital to the future of our children to prepare for the future Ai world that will change the educational system to it’s core. The Arts in Education will provide the most important tool for this new future world; imagination and creativity. Using these essential qualities to master the Ai technology, I also teach values and virtues within the art curriculum, using art lessons to bridge the core subjects and integrating native culture along with instilling core values that build character and self-respect.***

The work ahead of us—transitioning toward creative, collaborative, and multidisciplinary environments—is a serious undertaking that requires robust support. Establishing Department of Education arts integration specialist positions is a critical step in preparing our keiki for the future. Arts integration is not a luxury; it is an essential tool for student success, emotional intelligence, and cultural preservation in Hawai’i.

Please pass HB2436 to ensure our schools are places of growth, collaboration and creativity.

HB-2436-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 4:18:05 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lei Fisher	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I **strongly support** this bill as a mom of a child going to public school & wishing that there was more focus and funding on arts education. I wish that more parents, teachers, and even children in the public school system could hear about this bill, because I am sure there would be more community support if so. This is very important for child development and education as a whole, please **PASS** this measure & give the requested, dedicated funding that DOE does not already possess for this purpose.

Lei Fisher, Hale'iwa

HB-2436-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 9:55:43 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Debra McGee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Debra McGee and I am a community member from Hawi, HI I am writing in strong support of HB2436.

As a teaching artist and director, I am constantly seeing the positive benefits of having the arts in school. My students have increased focus, confidence, and overall success academically.

The work ahead of us—transitioning toward creative, collaborative, and multidisciplinary environments—is a serious undertaking that requires robust support. Establishing Department of Education arts integration specialist positions is a critical step in preparing our keiki for the future. Arts integration is not a luxury; it is an essential tool for student success, emotional intelligence, and cultural preservation in Hawai‘i.

Please pass HB2436 to ensure our schools are places of growth, collaboration and creativity.

Mahalo,

Debra McGee

HB-2436-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 7:14:02 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
valerie delahaye-ippolito	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Art for children is necessity for their mental and physical development. It is an integral part of their journey to discover their surrounding, their culture, themselves.... Art is the only time they get to be truly express themself and dare to share and process difficult emotions. This a part of children development too often removed and too often ignore creating an unbalance in children development. The schools are barely surviving please do not cut those classes that are so important to growing up a balanced and adjusted. Thank you very much for our keikies.

HB-2436-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 10:05:25 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cristina Holt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am submitting testimony in support of HB 2436 HD1.

I am autistic, and performance arts is how I found my way through. Without the arts, I would not be here. That is not a figure of speech. The arts gave me a path when traditional academic instruction did not fit how my brain works, and I am certain I am not the only one.

Without art there is no critical thinking. Without art there is no imagination. And without imagination, there are no solutions to the massive problems we are facing today. We cannot afford to treat the arts as optional.

Hawaii has something special with the HA framework, which centers belonging, aloha, and cultural connection as core educational values. Arts integration is one of the most natural ways to actually live those values in the classroom, not just as a poster on the wall, but as a real daily practice that reaches kids who might otherwise fall through the cracks.

This bill establishes one arts integration coordinator per island, four positions total, to support teachers, connect schools with local artists and cultural practitioners, and bring arts-based learning to classrooms across the state. For \$600,000, that is an investment with returns that show up in student engagement, cultural pride, and whole-child development in ways that test scores alone will never capture.

I urge the committee to pass HB 2436 HD1.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

HB-2436-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 1:05:33 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
M. Leilani DeMello	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I KĀKO‘O this bill and all efforts to provide Hawai‘i’s keiki with the opportunity to learn about the arts.

Mahalo,

M. Leilani DeMello

‘Ōla‘a, Puna, Hawai‘i

HB-2436-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 2:40:57 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Uilani Naipo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure.

HB-2436-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 8:49:58 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Domino Cohn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Domino Cohn, and I am a community member from Hōlualoa. I am writing in strong support of HB2436.

I am an artist myself, and the mom of a 7 yr old keiki. I have seen firsthand how art education in his school (Hōlualoa Elementary) has helped him to thrive academically. He is a creative thinker, and even the small integration that they are able to offer at Hōlualoa has helped him to engage with reading and writing; his enthusiasm for the freedom found in art carries over into subjects that are more rigorous. As any parent knows, gaining and holding interest is half the battle when it comes to getting your child the education they deserve!

The work ahead of us—transitioning toward creative, collaborative, and multidisciplinary environments—is a serious undertaking that requires robust support. Establishing Department of Education arts integration specialist positions is a critical step in preparing our keiki for the future. I know from first hand experience that arts integration is not a luxury; it is an essential tool for student success, emotional intelligence, and cultural preservation in Hawai‘i.

Please pass HB2436 to ensure our schools are places of growth, collaboration and creativity.

Mahalo piha,

Domino Cohn

HB-2436-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 11:39:14 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
C.Yamamoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Art education is essential. The experience of creating art helps to foster critical thinking, reflect on and communicate the expression of self, and promote resourcefulness and creative solutions. The experience of art prompts us to observe and have compassion for the world around us, and our place within it. Critically, in these times where we are accustomed to fast results and AI assistance, the experience of creating art helps us to practice patience and resiliency - that mistakes can be constructive opportunities to learn and see new possibilities. Art in schools are not just about art itself - it's not to produce artists; it's to support the development of well rounded and resilient young people who will be good participants in the classroom, in their jobs, in their communities, and in society.

HB-2436-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 8:59:00 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
jeanne wheeler	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Alisha: in our current mass-marketed media cultural predicament, we very much need this bill to nurture inspiration for our Keiki - please oass it! Mahalo, JW

HB-2436-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 7:57:44 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
noriko donna	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha.

Arts and culture are not extras in education — they are essential life skills. Research consistently shows that students engaged in arts-integrated learning demonstrate stronger critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving skills. These are the very capacities our keiki need to thrive in an increasingly complex, uncertain, and rapidly changing world.

HB2436 recognizes what educators, families, and communities already know: arts integration strengthens whole-child development. Creative expression improves student engagement, supports academic achievement across subjects, and deepens cultural connections. For many students, the arts are how learning finally clicks — especially for English learners, multilingual students, and those who struggle in traditional classroom settings.

Just as importantly, arts and culture are healing. Our children are carrying unprecedented levels of stress, trauma, and anxiety. Music, movement, storytelling, visual art, and cultural practices provide safe, evidence-based pathways for emotional regulation, resilience, and connection. These practices help students process grief, build empathy, and feel a sense of belonging — all of which are foundational to mental health and learning.

HB2436 thoughtfully invests in arts integration coordinators across our islands, strengthening partnerships with local artists and cultural practitioners and aligning with the Department of Education’s Nā Hopena A‘o framework. This approach honors ‘ike kupuna, cultural identity, and place-based learning while equipping teachers with practical tools to integrate the arts into everyday instruction.

By passing HB2436, we are not only supporting education — we are investing in a more innovative, compassionate, and culturally grounded society. We are giving our keiki the tools to think critically, feel deeply, heal collectively, and lead with empathy. Please support HB2436. Our children, our culture, and our future depend on it.

Mahalo.

HB-2436-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 9:50:59 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Abbey Hume	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Abbey, and I am a community member from Captain Cook, Hawaii. I am writing in strong support of HB2436.

I've seen firsthand how the arts deepen learning — when creativity is part of the process, people engage more thoughtfully and retain ideas in a lasting way. Especially in times like we are currently experiencing, the arts matter more than ever. Art is life, and not only enriches our lives but also propels us towards a more peaceful and a more unified society.

The work ahead of us—transitioning toward creative, collaborative, and multidisciplinary environments—is a serious undertaking that requires robust support. Establishing Department of Education arts integration specialist positions is a critical step in preparing our keiki for the future. Arts integration is not a luxury; it is an essential tool for student success, emotional intelligence, and cultural preservation in Hawai'i.

Please pass HB2436 to ensure our schools are places of growth, collaboration, and creativity.

Mahalo, Abbey Hume

HB-2436-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 10:01:37 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aliza Gebin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Aliza Gebin, and I am a community member from South Kona. I am writing in strong support of HB2436.

As an arts educator who has worked in various DOE schools and a parent of a elementary school student, I understand the absolute necessity to incorporate arts into education. The arts are not just a supplement to education; the arts reinforce standard curriculum and create a wider range of touchpoints for students to connect with their own learning in ways that help develop life-long learners.

The work ahead of us—transitioning toward creative, collaborative, and multidisciplinary environments—is a serious undertaking that requires robust support. Establishing Department of Education arts integration specialist positions is a critical step in preparing our keiki for the future. Arts integration is not a luxury; it is an essential tool for student success, emotional intelligence, and cultural preservation in Hawai‘i.

Please pass HB2436 to ensure our schools are places of growth, collaboration and creativity.

Mahalo, Aliza Gebin

HB-2436-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 10:09:57 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shannon Matson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

Please support this bill. Art is mental healthcare. Art is education. Art is revolution. Art is joy. Our children deserve more access to art that is culturally grounded in practice and place.

Mahalo,

Shannon M.

Hawai'i Island Resident

HB-2436-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 1:32:31 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Julie Ybarra	Hawaii DOE	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Julie Ybarra, and I am a community member from Holualoa, as well as a teacher at Holualoa Elementary School. I am writing in strong support of HB2436.

I have worked with the Donkey Mill Art Center for many years and the skills and family values that the artists bring out in our keiki is not only a skill, but also a blessing. The time and dedication that our local artists bring to the community has been on display at our First Friday events, and what the students have been able to develop and share with their families has been very much appreciated over the years.

The work ahead of us—transitioning toward creative, collaborative, and multidisciplinary environments—is a serious undertaking that requires robust support. Establishing Department of Education arts integration specialist positions is a critical step in preparing our keiki for the future. Arts integration is not a luxury; it is an essential tool for student success, emotional intelligence, and cultural preservation in Hawai‘i.

Please pass HB2436 to ensure our schools are places of growth, collaboration and creativity.

Mahalo,

Julie Ybarra

HB-2436-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 2:01:57 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Setsuko Morinoue	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Setsuko Morinoue, and I am testifying on this HB2436, also on behalf of my husband Alvin “Hiroki” Morinoue.

We strongly support HB2436, ARTS INTEGRATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

We are the founders of Holualoa Foundation for Arts & Culture established in 1995 on the Big Island. I am the visionary of this organization, observing over 30 years, I believe that our way of working with DOE's requirement and cooperation with process based projects, creativity will help raise our youth to be skillful in focus, resourceful, risk taker, sincerness, mindfulness, better collaborator, critical thinker, respectful, thoughtful, responsible and problem-solver.

Arts-integrating learning is the way to create our better educational setting. If we know how to invest in our future..., we should invest in Arts-integration education.

Please support HB2436. Our children, our culture, and our future depend on it.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify

Setsuko Morinoue

Holualoa, HI 96725

Feb. 18, 2026