



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

Date: 02/06/2026

Time: 09:30 AM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: CAA

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB2437, RELATING TO ARTS EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Appropriates funds to the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts for the Artists in the Schools program.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education supports HB 2437 and defers to the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts as to the implementation of the Artists in Schools program.

The Artists in the Schools program, managed by the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, provides supplemental access to high-quality arts education, a foundation of whole-child development that fosters increased student engagement and academic success. By embedding professional teaching artists directly into public school classrooms, students across the state, particularly those in rural and Title I communities, may receive meaningful, standards-based arts experiences. The Department appreciates this long standing partnership with the Artists in the Schools program.

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



HAWAII
STATE FOUNDATION on
CULTURE and the ARTS

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

**Before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CULTURE & ARTS
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2026 Conference Room 309 at 9:30AM**

**HOUSE BILL 2437
RELATING TO
ARTS EDUCATION**

Dear Chair Kapela and members of the Committee,

SFCA **SUPPORTS** H.B. 2437 which appropriates funds to the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts for the Artists in the Schools program.

The Artists in the Schools arts residency grants provide engaging, creative, and fun learning experiences based on the Fine Arts standards for all grade levels, through residencies with qualified, trained teaching artists from the [Artistic Teaching Partners \(ATP\) Roster](#). Many of these teaching artists integrate their art form with other core curriculum areas, such as language arts, math, social studies, and science, meeting both Fine Arts and other core standards. For many students, the Artists in the Schools program is the one main access point to arts education.

There has been an increase in demand for the AITS program, with more applications for residences in public and charter schools throughout the state of Hawaii. Applications have steadily increased in numbers since the pandemic, starting at 97 applications in 2020 to 132 applications in 2025. This serves as a testament to the popularity and positive impact of the program. The appropriation in this measure is appreciated and supported, as the SFCA was unable to fund 25 applications that were approved by the review panel in Fiscal Year 2026.

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

TO: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CULTURE AND ARTS
The Honorable Jeanne Kapela, Chair
The Honorable Sam Satoru Kong, Vice Chair, and
Members of the Committee

FROM: Elise Inouye, Director of Policy & Public Affairs

RE: Testimony in Support for HB 2437, Relating to Arts Education

DATE: Friday, February 6, 2026 at 9:30 am

LOCATION: Conference Room 309

The Hawai'i Community Foundation (HCF) **supports** HB 2437, relating to arts education. This bill would appropriate funding to the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts (SFCA) for the Artists in the Schools (AITS) program. For over 18 years, HCF has partnered with the SFCA by awarding funding to increase access to arts education at public and charter schools through the AITS program.

AITS brings dance, drama/theatre, literary arts, mime, music, puppetry, and visual arts to classrooms across the state, increasing access to arts education. However, the demand for the AITS program from public and charter schools is greater than the current available funds. The funding from this bill is essential to increase the reach of this program across the state, especially for Title I schools and schools in rural communities.

HCF believes that when opportunities to practice and participate in arts and culture are inclusive and accessible to everyone, from keiki to kūpuna, we will have a healthier community in Hawai'i. That is why we are committed to increasing access to arts and culture as a priority area within HCF's CHANGE Framework.

Supporting the arts and culture community contributes significantly to the well-being of Hawai'i's residents, including keiki. One of the teaching artists for the AITS program shared that through the AITS residencies, "students not only developed visual art skills, but also deepened their sense of identity, connection to place, and belonging within their community." Please advance HB 2437 to continue to affirm the importance of arts and culture in Hawai'i.

HB-2437

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 2:59:58 PM

Testimony for CAA on 2/6/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Megan Blazak	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Chair Kapela, Vice Chair Kong, and Members of the Committee,

As a constituent of House District 2, I support this measure.

HB-2437

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 1:32:56 PM

Testimony for CAA on 2/6/2026 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I **strongly support** this measure as a Native Hawaiian, artist, & lover of art & art education, as well as a parent of a child who loves art. Art & self-expression are highly underrated parts of overall health & wellbeing. I hope that my daughter & other keiki are able to continue with art education, particularly in public schools. Please **PASS** this measure!!

HB-2437

Submitted on: 2/6/2026 8:55:05 AM

Testimony for CAA on 2/6/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brissa Christophersen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of HB2437, to appropriate funds to the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts for the Artists in the Schools program. Access to high-quality arts education support learner engagement, academic success, and whole-child development. I know firsthand what it was like in a K-12 education here in Hawai‘i and I remembered what it was like when professional artists came into the classroom to be with us. It made us feel valued and like our education meant something to others in our community. As a professional artist now, I can speak to the need of getting established artists in schools and providing more access especially for non-O‘ahu schools, where accessibility is very difficult.