



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

Date: 03/05/2026

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 308 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: FIN

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB2533, HD1, RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Requires the Department of Education to provide additional benefits to: (1) teachers with special assignments where their duties and responsibilities are greater than their ordinary duties and responsibilities; (2) teachers in Hawaiian language medium education whose responsibilities are greater or unique and require additional language skills; and (3) teachers at special needs schools. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) provides comments regarding HB 2533, HD 1.

The Department supports fair compensation for educators with increased responsibilities. However, any proposed changes to compensation and associated benefits should fall under the purview of the collective bargaining process.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2533, HD 1.

HB-2533-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 9:20:21 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cindy R Ajimine	One Impact Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Honorable Committee Chair & Members:

I am writing to STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2533 for the reasons below. Please vote yes to help our keiki!

- 1. Will help to support and retain teachers who assume responsibilities beyond their normal duties.**
- 2. Will help to create parity between teachers and other education officers at special needs schools who already receive additional benefits.**

Thank you!



HOALOHA PROJECT

Serving foster keiki of Hawai'i

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

Hoaloha Project respectfully offers **strong support** for HB2533. Teachers are more than educators – they are mentors, advocates, and sources of stability that many keiki rely on each day. This is especially true for Native Hawaiian children in foster care, for whom school may be the most consistent and supportive environment in their lives. With nearly half of Hawai'i's foster keiki being Native Hawaiian, Kaiapuni teachers play a vital role in nurturing identity, belonging, and well-being while keeping students connected to language, culture, and community. **Teachers often work beyond their contracted hours without compensation**, and this burden is especially great for Kaiapuni educators.

Teachers are vital every day, and the COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted just how essential they are to our keiki. Ensuring that educators are fairly compensated **honors the tireless work they do and supports the stability and success of foster youth** and all students across our islands. Hoaloha Project urges your support.

Mahalo nui,

Ku'u Pasco

Ku'u Pasco
Executive Director
Hoaloha Project





TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB2533 HD1

Relating to Additional Benefits for Teachers with Special Assignments

My name is **Andy Omer Gokce**, Executive Director of **Kūlia Academy**, a public charter school in Honolulu. I am writing in **support of HB2533 HD1**.

This measure appropriately recognizes the additional responsibilities carried by teachers who serve in specialized assignments, including those working in Hawaiian language medium education and other programs that require unique expertise and dedication. Supporting these educators is important for strengthening Hawaii's education system and ensuring students receive high-quality instruction.

Teachers in specialized roles often take on responsibilities that require additional preparation, training, and commitment beyond typical classroom duties. Providing additional benefits for these assignments helps schools recruit and retain educators who bring important expertise to their work with students.

As education continues to evolve, schools are also developing instructional programs in emerging areas that require specialized knowledge. Recognizing specialized assignments can help ensure that teachers with expertise in developing fields, including areas such as artificial intelligence and advanced technologies, are also encouraged and supported.

Ensuring that teachers serving in specialized roles are properly supported strengthens our education system and benefits students across Hawaii.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this measure.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andy Omer Gokce", written in a cursive style.

Andy Omer Gokce
Executive Director
Kūlia Academy
2340 Omilo Ln
Honolulu, HI 96819
(808) 551-1413

HB-2533-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 1:17:47 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaleo K.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in **strong support** of HB2533. As a parent who transferred my keiki from English-medium schools to Kaiapuni schools, I can share from firsthand experience that our kumu carry workloads far beyond what is considered normal.

They spend their personal time creating books and learning materials in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i because adequate resources do not exist. They stay late, work through weekends, and stretch limited supplies to ensure our keiki receive the same educational opportunities provided to other students. They attend meetings, advocate with school administration and the Board of Education, and work tirelessly to secure basic needs such as transportation, preventing preschool closures, and ensuring adequate staffing. Some teachers are forced to teach multiple grade levels simply because there are not enough qualified staff.

Too often, their concerns — and those of families — are met with resistance or dismissiveness. This is an equity issue. After more than 30 years, the oldest Kaiapuni school Ke Kula Kaiapuni ‘o Waiiau still does not offer a full middle or high school pathway. These issues have resulted in repeated legal challenges against the state — challenges that could have been avoided through proper support and funding.

Compensating our teachers for performing the work of many roles instead of one is not only reasonable — it is the right thing to do. This measure would represent a **meaningful step toward equity**.

All teachers across our islands deserve far more than they currently receive, especially given the pay gap, with **DOE leadership earning nearly three times what classroom educators make**. Our teachers are the ones who stand face-to-face with our children every day, shaping their futures and strengthening our communities.

Additionally, **HB1496** would complement HB2533 by providing teachers, students, and the Hawaiian language with much-needed support. Prior committee testimony demonstrates how urgently our schools are calling for leadership that understands Hawaiian language medium education and is committed to helping them succeed. We respectfully hope this bill will be scheduled for a hearing so it can receive full consideration.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify. I respectfully urge your support and passage of HB2533 as an important step toward correcting longstanding inequities in our public education system.

HB-2533-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 1:33:27 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Donna P. Van Osdol	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Members of the Committee:

As I noted in my previous testimony, I support this bill because it gives incentives to teachers who work in certain areas.

Thank you for your time.

HB-2533-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 5:00:25 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lanette Bourg	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this HB2533. I hope it'll stabilize our education workforce and attract more stable and skilled educators. Thank you, Lanette Bourg

Honorable Chairs & Committee Members:

I am writing to **STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2533** for the reasons below. Please vote yes to help our keiki.

1. Will help to support and **retain teachers** who assume responsibilities beyond their normal duties.
2. Will help to **create parity** between teachers and other education officers at special needs schools who already receive additional benefits.

Cynthia A Dorflinger

HB-2533-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 9:22:39 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Terri Yoshinaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

HB-2533-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 9:50:08 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ayman El-Swaify	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am IN FAVOR OF HB2533.

This bill requires the DOE to provide additional benefits to: (1) teachers with special assignments where their duties and responsibilities are greater than the ordinary; (2) teachers at special needs schools; (3) teachers in Hawaiian language education whose responsibilities are greater, unique and require additional language skills.

This bill is a positive step to help retain qualified and devoted teachers in our State.

HB-2533-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 11:25:02 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hayden Winchester	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha kakou,

Kakoo wau i keia pila HB 2533.

O wau o Imaikalani Winchester. No Waipio, Ewa mai au. He Kumu Ike Hawaii au no 20 oi aku makahiki a kakoo nui wau i keia pila HB 2533 e hooikaika ai i na kumu e auamo nei i ke kuleana koikoi. E malama i ke kumu.

Kakoo i keia pila HB 2533!

Nana i ke kumu,

Imaikalani Winchester

HB-2533-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 12:00:59 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
christopher castillo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Christopher Castillo, and I am a current DOE EOEL Pre-K teacher. I am writing to express my strong support for HB 2533. My perspective comes from a career in education, where I have previously taught K-6 music and art, as well as 6th grade.

In my previous roles, the workload was heavy, but I was never asked to perform duties so far outside the professional scope I signed up for. Since moving into the Pre-K space, the compensation simply does not add up when compared to the physical and administrative reality of the job.

In addition to planning lessons, assessing development, and supporting academic and socialemotional growth, my daily reality involves significant "invisible labor" that is more akin to janitorial and caregiving work than traditional instruction:

- Sanitization: I personally disinfect the classroom and every toy daily to prevent the spread of illnesses like Hand, Foot, and Mouth disease.
- Health & Safety: I scrub tables and floors to ensure sanitary spaces for my keiki to eat.
- Maintenance: I frequently take home blankets and dramatic play clothes to wash on my own time.
- Physical Care: I am responsible for potty training and changing diapers or pull-ups for students who enter our program with those needs.

Even with the support of an EA and a PPT, the demands of the 3-to-5-year-old age range are constant. We are simultaneously teaching speech and social-emotional skills while meeting basic human needs like eating and hygiene.

Furthermore, I want to emphasize that my experience is just one example of the specialized roles in our schools that deserve more. We cannot forget the extraordinary duties performed in Special Education (SPED) classrooms, where teachers manage intense medical and behavioral needs, or our Hawaiian Language Immersion (Kaiapuni) programs, where educators are the primary architects of curriculum and cultural preservation.

I urge you to support HB 2533 to set a vital precedent that acknowledges the true, multifaceted scope of our work. While this bill specifically addresses teachers, it is a necessary first step in recognizing the intensity of specialized roles.

I hope that by passing this bill, we create a path that will eventually flow down to support our Educational Assistants (EAs), PPTs, and other staff in specialized areas who are also doing this heavy lifting alongside us. Mahalo for your time and for your commitment to Hawaii's educators and students.

Sincerely,

Christopher P. Castillo

Waianae Elementary Pre-K Teacher

HB-2533-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 12:08:01 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Avyanna	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

4 March 2026

TO: Aloha Chair and Members of the House Committee

In STRONG agreement of HB 2533

Aloha O Kamele Ko'u inoa

O Halau Ku Mana Ko'u kula

I am in strong agreement to this bill.

I feel that these kumu should receive benefits because not only do they have so much kuleana but they also hold a strong care and connection with their students. I will further testify when I know more information on this bill in the benefits.

I hope you take this into consideration

Mahalo,

Avyanna Kamelealohaho'opōmaika'i McPeek-Batlin

Mo'ili'ili, Oahu, Hawaii

HB-2533-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 5:30:00 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Robello-Gazmen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

Aloha, my name is John Robello-Gazmen, and I am a parent from Ewa Beach, Honolulu, HI. I am writing in strong support of HB2533.

As a parent with children in Hawai‘i’s public schools, I see firsthand how much our teachers do for our keiki. Many educators go above and beyond their normal duties, whether teaching in Hawaiian language immersion programs, supporting students at schools with greater needs, or taking on additional responsibilities that require special training and commitment.

Teachers who step into these roles help strengthen our schools and preserve the culture and language that make Hawai‘i unique. Supporting them with additional benefits is a meaningful way to show appreciation and help keep dedicated teachers in our classrooms.

Our keiki deserve stable schools with educators who feel valued and supported. HB2533 is an important step toward recognizing the extra work some teachers espically our special education teachers, do and helping retain the talented educators our students rely on.

Mahalo for the oppotunity to provide testimony, and I respectfully urge the committee to pass HB2533.

Sincerely,
John Robello-Gazmen
Ewa Beach, HI

HB-2533-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 7:31:18 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brett Kulbis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Todd and Committee Members,

My name is Brett Kulbis, I'm a 26yr retired Navy Veteran, who took a solemn oath to defend the Constitution from all enemies foreign and domestic, and that oath didn't expire when I retired. I live in Ewa Beach.

I SUPPORT BILL HB-2533 HD1.

HB-2533 HD1 recognizes that some teachers assume responsibilities well beyond the standard classroom role, through service at special needs schools, Hawaiian language immersion instruction, and special assignments; and directs the Department of Education to provide additional benefits to these educators. This targeted adjustment promotes parity with educational officers, who already receive added benefits for similar heightened responsibilities, and begins to correct a clear inequity in our compensation structure.

Teachers in Hawaiian language medium education carry unique obligations, including advanced language proficiency, culturally grounded curriculum development, and helping the State meet its constitutional duty to provide reasonable access to Hawaiian immersion education. Likewise, teachers at special needs schools work with large concentrations of low-performing students, facing high stress and complex classroom challenges. Recognizing and appropriately compensating these roles is essential to retaining skilled educators where they are needed most.

Finally, HB-2533 HD1 includes an appropriation from the general fund to implement these additional benefits, representing a focused and fiscally sensible investment in workforce stability rather than an expansion of bureaucracy. Retaining experienced teachers in high-need and specialized positions reduces costly turnover and supports better outcomes for students across our public school system. I respectfully urge you to pass HB-2533 HD1.

Respectfully,

Brett Kulbis

HB-2533-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 7:53:50 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Charmaine Doran	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha

I am submitting written testimony in strong support of HB2533. This bill acknowledges the critical work of educators whose duties go well beyond the ordinary—teachers with special assignments, Hawaiian language-medium teachers, and those at special needs schools. It requires the Department of Education provide additional benefits to these educators and appropriates funds to do so.

In practice, this means better support for our Hawaiian studies and Kaiapuni teachers—who already deliver instruction in two languages and navigate unique curricular demands—and for teachers who fill in for special education classrooms - a role that brings significant and stressors.

HB2533 puts concern into action and demonstrates the legislatures desire to fairly and adequately compensate teachers as well as provide our students with the best possible education.

I commend Representative Reyes Oda for continuing to advocate for teachers throughout Hawaii.

I respectfully ask for the passage of HB2533.

Mahalo for your time and service.

HB-2533-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 7:55:58 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Catherine Collado	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Chairs & Committee Members:

I am a constituent living in Representative Matsumoto's district, House District 38.

I am writing to **STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2533** for the reasons below. Please vote yes to help our keiki.

1. Will help to support and **retain teachers** who assume responsibilities beyond their normal duties.
2. Will help to **create parity** between teachers and other education officers at special needs schools who already receive additional benefits.



HB-2533-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 10:49:55 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
TERI SAVAIINAEA	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Todd and Committee Members,

I support HB2533 HD1.

Teachers who take on duties beyond ordinary responsibilities deserve mandatory, fair compensation. This bill requires additional benefits for teachers with special assignments, at special-needs schools, and in Hawaiian language medium education, and appropriates funds to do so.

Making pay a requirement, not optional, is vital to equity—especially for educators working with high-need students and preserving Hawaiian language and culture. Passing HB2533 HD1 helps retain and honor those teachers who shoulder greater responsibility for our keiki.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support.

Kind regards,

Teri Kia Savaiinaea

Wai'anae resident

HB-2533-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/5/2026 10:04:29 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rain K. Kahula Yong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 2533.

Teachers who take on additional responsibilities beyond their standard classroom duties deserve recognition and meaningful support. This measure acknowledges the extra work required of teachers with special assignments, teachers in Hawaiian language medium education, and teachers working in schools serving high-need students.

As an educator in a Hawaiian language medium program, I know firsthand that this work requires specialized knowledge, additional preparation, and deep cultural and linguistic commitment. Teaching through ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i often means creating curriculum, resources, and instructional materials that simply do not exist in abundance. This added responsibility goes far beyond the typical expectations of classroom teaching.

Providing additional benefits for educators in these roles is an important step toward valuing the unique expertise and effort required. It also helps recruit and retain teachers in critical programs that serve our students and strengthen Hawai‘i’s cultural and educational future.

Instead of Hawaiian immersion teachers "may" be paid, it should reflect "shall pay".

Mahalo for your consideration and support of this important measure.

Respectfully,
Rain Kahula Yong
Papa 2 @ Ka Waihona o ka Na‘auao
Leeward District