



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:** HB2533, 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 moneys.

**Department's Position:**

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

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.



# HOALOHA PROJECT

*Serving foster keiki of Hawai'i*

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, 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



**HB-2533**

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 7:40:29 PM

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

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

Comments:

**Testimony in Strong Support of HB2533**

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

My name is Kumu Kahula Yong, and I am a public school teacher in Hawai‘i. I am writing in strong support of HB2533.

This measure recognizes what many of us in the classroom live every day... that not all teaching assignments carry the same scope of responsibility, workload, or required skill set. While all teachers work hard, some positions require additional expertise, time, and emotional labor that go beyond ordinary classroom expectations.

First, teachers with special assignments often take on significant additional duties outside of direct instruction. Whether coordinating programs, mentoring staff, managing curriculum initiatives, or serving in leadership capacities, these educators shoulder responsibilities that extend well beyond the standard teaching role. Providing additional benefits acknowledges that expanded workload and helps retain experienced educators in these critical positions.

Second, teachers in Hawaiian language medium education carry unique and vital responsibilities. Teaching in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i requires advanced fluency, deep cultural knowledge, and ongoing commitment to language revitalization. This is a super tough position to fill. These educators are not only teaching academic content; they are actively sustaining and perpetuating Hawai‘i’s indigenous language and culture. The skill set required is specialized, and the pool of qualified educators is limited. Providing additional benefits is an investment in the future of Hawaiian language education and in the preservation of our cultural heritage. Especially with our growing numbers of our kaiapuni students enrolled in kaiapuni schools, we need more kumu. We need to make this career more attractive to those who are looking into this career and to help retain those who are already on the front lines in this career.

Finally, teachers at special needs schools serve some of our most vulnerable students. These educators manage complex behavioral, medical, and academic needs daily. Their work requires specialized training, immense patience, and extraordinary dedication. Supporting these teachers through additional benefits helps ensure stability and continuity for students who depend on consistent, highly skilled support.

Teacher retention remains a serious concern across our state. When educators in high-demand or uniquely challenging roles feel undervalued or overextended, we risk losing them. HB2533 is a meaningful step toward recognizing the differentiated responsibilities within our profession and providing equitable support.

I respectfully urge you to pass HB2533. Mahalo for your commitment to Hawai'i's students and educators.

Sincerely,  
Kahula Yong  
Kumu Kaiapuni, Papa 2  
kyong@kawaihonapcs.org

**HB-2533**

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 1:02:27 AM

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

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

Comments:

**Testimony in Support of HB 2533**

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 social-emotional 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**

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 1:11:17 AM

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

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
M. Leilani DeMello	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I KĀKO‘O this bill and hope that our teachers will see the benefits of this sooner than later.

Mahalo,

M. Leilani DeMello

**HB-2533**

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 8:34:43 AM

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

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

Comments:

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

I am in favor of this bill. Our teachers already have difficult jobs, so increasing salaries for educators who are in certain specialized fields is a wonderful incentive to make sure we retain them.

Good bill! Thank you for your time and the opportunity to submit testimony.

**HB-2533**

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 11:34:04 AM

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

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Melanie Pokakaa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee members, I support HB2533. Teachers in special roles, Hawaiian Language Programs, and special needs schools do extra work and serve students with high needs. They deserve additional benefits for their hard work. This bill helps support and keep strong teachers for our students.

**HB-2533**

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 11:41:49 AM

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

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Terri Yoshinaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

**HB-2533**

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 5:30:47 PM

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

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, OPPOSE

2B budget

**HB-2533**

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 1:46:59 PM

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

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, 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. It has resulted in repeated legal challenges against the state — **challenges that could have been avoided through proper support and funding**.

After more than 30 years, the oldest Kaiapuni program in the state still does not offer a full middle or high school pathway.

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 when **the Department of Education superintendent salary is set to exceed \$400,000 while the average teacher salary is not even half that amount**. Our teachers are the ones who stand face-to-face with our children every day, shaping their futures and strengthening our communities.

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



**HB-2533**

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 4:42:06 PM

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

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kahea Faria	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai kakou,

I am writing in support of HB2533.

Mahalo!

Kahea Faria

**HB-2533**

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 4:52:55 PM

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

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Chloe Pua'ena Vierra-Villanueva	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure. Mahalo.

**HB-2533**

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 5:06:57 PM

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

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tiana Keopuhiwa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou,

I am writting In support for this bill.

Mahalo,

Tiana Keopuhiwa

**HB-2533**

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 8:56:52 PM

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

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Brett Kulbis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Woodson 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.

HB-2533 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 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.

Respectfully,

Brett Kulbis

**HB-2533**

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 9:19:13 PM

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

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair Woodson and Members,

I strongly support HB2533.

Teachers in special assignments, Hawaiian language medium education, and special needs schools carry greater and more complex responsibilities. These roles require specialized skills, language proficiency, and additional commitment.

If we expect strong outcomes for our students, we must properly recognize and support the educators who serve them. Added responsibility deserves added support.

I respectfully urge you to pass HB2533

Mahalo,

Teri Kia Savaiinaea

Wai'anae resident

DOE Leeward Substitute Teacher

**HB-2533**

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 9:27:35 PM

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

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Shanae Hatchell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Shanae Hatchell and I am a teacher at Kahuku High and Intermediate school. I am writing in support of HB 2533. Teacher workloads have increased and thus teacher compensation should increase in response.

Thank you,

Shanae Hatchell

**HB-2533**

Submitted on: 2/19/2026 8:43:30 AM

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

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

Comments:

My name is Tammy Holt, a Hawaii public school educator, I support HB 2533.

Under HRS §302A-631, educational officers, principals, and vice principals qualify for additional compensation when their duties are “greater than ordinary responsibilities” or when assigned to a designated special needs school. The statute recognizes that increased responsibility warrants increased compensation.

Teachers in the following settings carry comparable increases in workload:

Hawaiian Language and Native Hawaiian-Focused Classrooms

- Advanced Hawaiian language proficiency requirements
- Culturally grounded curriculum development
- Integration of traditional knowledge systems and ‘ike Hawai‘i
- Translation or creation of standards-aligned instructional materials
- Development of original assessments

Because commercial curriculum is rarely designed for immersion or culturally grounded models, these teachers must build or significantly modify materials independently.

Special Education and Special Needs Classrooms

- Implementation and monitoring of IEPs
- Differentiated instruction across multiple disability categories
- Behavioral intervention planning and data tracking
- Compliance documentation
- Coordination with service providers and families

These responsibilities exceed ordinary instructional duties and substantially increase workload.

If statute recognizes additional compensation when administrative duties exceed standard expectations, **equity requires similar recognition** when classroom teachers responsibilities increase to meet diversified student needs.

HB 2533 aligns compensation with actual workload and statutory precedent.

I respectfully urge the passage of this bill.

Mahalo,  
Tammy Holt

**HB-2533**

Submitted on: 2/19/2026 8:55:05 AM

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

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kamuela Werner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

As a DOE educator who manages a two-acre campus farm and two campus plant nurseries that serve as living classrooms for agriculture, horticulture, and Hawaiian history, I strongly support this bill.

Mahalo,

Kamuela Werner

**HB-2533**

Submitted on: 2/19/2026 1:39:10 PM

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

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Colin Kennedy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

As a state DOE teacher at a public charter school for 17 years, equity and growth opportunities are important to my career and ability to live in Hawaii. I support HB2533 because it gives teachers opportunities to grow their careers and earn more income through becoming specialized in the students and environments in which they work. Please vote to approve this bill so teachers can enjoy the freedom to grow in their careers and lives. Mahalo for your consideration.