JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

KEITH T. HAYASHI
SUPERINTENDENT

STATE OF HAWAI`I
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA ʻOIHANA HOʻONAʻAUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAI`I 96804

**Date:** 03/20/2026
**Time:** 01:00 PM
**Location:** CR 229 & Videoconference
**Committee:** EDU

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

**Title of Bill:** HB2534, HD1, RELATING TO ROBOTICS.

**Purpose of Bill:** Appropriates funds to the Department of Education to establish robotics as an interscholastic sport. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) agrees with the Legislature on the value of robotics education as outlined in HB2534 HD1 and appreciates the intent of the bill, and offers comments and strong concerns.

The Department recognizes the value of robotics education in providing students with meaningful, hands-on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) learning opportunities. Robotics programs support critical thinking, collaboration, problem-solving, creativity, and have contributed to student engagement and success across the State.

While robotics is already a highly successful program within the Department, with schools earning national and international recognition, reclassifying it as an interscholastic sport may create unintended barriers. Specifically, interscholastic sports are subject to strict seasonal windows and mandatory "restricted periods" two times a year. Imposing these athletic scheduling rules could hinder robotics teams, which currently operate with the flexibility needed for year-round competition. Additionally, adding a new sport necessitates significant financial resources for coaching salaries, bus transportation, and equipment.

In Hawaii, interscholastic sports offerings are determined through league associations which assess whether a sport can be appropriately implemented across participating schools. Each league has established procedures to propose and approve new athletic programs. To date, robotics has not been formally proposed as an interscholastic sport in any of the 4 public school leagues (Oahu, Kauai, Maui, or Hawaii).

In reviewing how other states approach robotics, Texas and Connecticut are two examples that, while they list robotics as “interscholastic,” operationally treat it like an academic team activity centrally organized and separate from athletic sports. There is no state athletic association that has robotics as an interscholastic athletic sport.

Thus, in the Hawaii Department of Education, it is not appropriate for robotics to be included as an interscholastic sport, and perhaps a different structure should be explored.

The Department would benefit from Sections 2 and 3 of this measure which appropriates funds if robotics is established as an interscholastic sport, however, given the fiscal constraints facing the State, the Department respectfully asks that funding instead be appropriated to priorities identified in its Board-approved budget.

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

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**
GOVERNOR

**MAKALAPUA ALENCASTRE, ED. D.**
CHAIRPERSON

STATE OF HAWAII
**STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION**
**('AHA KULA HO'ĀMANA)**
http://CharterCommission.Hawaii.Gov
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1100, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
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| | |
|---|---|
| FOR: | HB 2534 HD1 RELATING TO ROBOTICS |
| DATE: | March 20, 2026 |
| TIME: | 2:00 P.M. |
| COMMITTEE: | Committee on Education |
| ROOM: | Conference Room 229 & Videoconference |
| FROM: | Ed H. Noh, Ed. D., Executive Director<br>State Public Charter School Commission |

Chair Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Committee:

The State Public Charter School Commission ("Commission") appreciates the opportunity to offer testimony in **SUPPORT of HB 2534 HD1** which ensures high-quality science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education and strengthens the State's technology workforce by appropriating moneys to establish robotics as an interscholastic sport.

Public charter school students participate in robotics, as well as other technology based programs, and would benefit from this measure. The Commission humbly requests that this measure be amended to clarify that any support and funding for robotics made available to Department of Education schools also be made available to charter schools.

The Commission is available to work with the Legislature, the DOE, and our public charter schools in the passage and implementation of this legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

**HB-2534-HD-1**
Submitted on: 3/19/2026 10:09:40 AM
Testimony for EDU on 3/20/2026 1:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hai Yang Martin | Testifying for Waialua Robotics | Support | Remotely Via Zoom |

Comments:

**Since the FIRST robotics program was established at Waialua High School in 1999, the State has embraced robotics technology as both an educational and a competitive platform.**

**Robotics is not just any after-school activity out there. It provides life skills for students all around the world. Robotics offers an intense, competitive environment for everyone participating, with teamwork and intellectual abilities in an inclusive, accessible sport. EVERYONE can compete and go pro, finding careers like our alumni in engineering, medical fields, education, and vocations like mechanic, machinist, and Airline pilot.**

**Robotics has provided me, as well as many other students, with an educational experience I would never have received in class. It has allowed me to communicate with my peers, as you would in a sports team, as I learn how to use advanced machinery and connect with people around the world in our common interests. If robotics became a sport, this experience could become more accessible to students all across Hawaii.**

**By supporting robotics programs, the State can ensure that Hawaii's youth will receive access to stable career paths while simultaneously stimulating economic growth. Funding can be used to keep talented individuals on our island and further educational innovation. Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of keiki across the state.**

**HB-2534-HD-1**
Submitted on: 3/19/2026 12:17:21 PM
Testimony for EDU on 3/20/2026 1:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---|---|---|---|
| Joshua Tom | Individual | Support | Remotely Via Zoom |

Comments:

I support this bill because recognizing robotics as a sport strengthens economic development, workforce growth, and access for our students.

Nine states already recognize robotics as a sport. That recognition elevates competition, increases visibility, and supports youth education. With the Hawaii brain drain, it is necessary to continue supporting these issues.

While some suggest placing robotics under Career and Technical Education, that would limit access. CTE pathways often require enrollment in specific classes or academies. Robotics is more than coding or engineering — it includes business, media, community service, and even what I'm doing here today, advocacy. Recognizing it as a sport keeps the doors open to all.

There's also the issue of advisor support. When prompted with activities beyond the classroom, teachers are most attracted to department heads, class advisors, or athletic coaches because they receive compensation. After-school club advisors often do not. Robotics demands long hours, technical expertise, and dedication. Without proper recognition and funding, we lose passionate mentors — and few are willing to replace them.

We've already seen what happens when support declines. In 2008, through ACT 111, the state invested $300,000 into the Hawaii Space Consortium, alongside a $1 million NASA Space Grant awarded to Governor Linda Lingle. That funding helped grow high school teams from 7 to 27, launched the first Hawaii Regional, and established the VEX Pan Pacific competition in 2016 — once the second-largest VEX event in the world. Today, without sustained aid, we've lost major programs and nearly 150 elementary teams over the past decade.

That said, concerns raised by educators are real. Robotics is expensive — team budgets range from $30,000 to $100,000 annually, supported largely by private sponsors and grants. When surfing became a sport under the HHSAA, teams lost private funding. Given current financial constraints, we cannot assume the DOE or HHSAA can fully absorb the costs to run robotics teams. We need to be able to sustain eligibility to fundraise, gain grants, and work with sponsors

Procurement rules are another challenge. Build season can be as short as six weeks. Teams must purchase parts immediately. Many teams are run as non profits to address there issues. School purchase orders can take one to three months — delays that would cripple teams.

We must also ensure charter and private schools are not left behind, and consider how multiple robotics leagues with different competition seasons would fit within a sports framework — potentially looking torward how we can create a robotics season for one or a handful of different competitions under the the the four different robotics organizations, as indicated in my written testimony

This is not a simple issue. But we should not end the conversation here. Students, educators, parents, and volunteers deserve to have these issues heard.

We need not rely on current system structures. Instead, we should look torwards how we can improve these systems to address the needs of our community.

please be aware of the concerns and be decisive with your conclusions. This bill is meant to support robotics, not harm it. Let’s refine it. Let’s address these concerns thoughtfully and strategically.

It is our kuleana to protect and strengthen this education — and to ensure every student has the opportunity to compete, innovate, and lead.

**HB-2534-HD-1**
Submitted on: 3/17/2026 1:09:32 PM
Testimony for EDU on 3/20/2026 1:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tyron Hamamoto | Individual | Oppose | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

As a long time member of the robotics community in Hawaii of nearly 25 years, I respectfully like to ask you to strongly consider opposing this bill for the current legislative session. While I have already submitted testimony previously, I would like to reiterate that I feel that the effort should be redirected to something more widely beneficial to STEM educational program access in Hawaii.

I strongly oppose this measure for the following reasons:

1. The reclassification of robotics as a sport will cause most teams to lose massive amounts of funding. Most teams which range from elementary all the way to high school are sustained by grants and donations from major corporations or non-profits. Should robotics be reclassified as a sport, teams would lose anywhere from thousands to millions in funding depending on the scale of the teams in question. This unfortunately would also apply to the tournaments that teams compete in, Most events are also sustained by corporate or non-profit sponsorships and may need to shut down as a result thereby restricting access to STEM Educational programs in the state of Hawaii.

2. This measure fails to consider that teams will lose valuable working hours due to the restrictions of athletic classifications. Teams typically work anywhere from 15-60 or more hours per week to meet deadlines and produce results that include winning championships on an international scale. An athletics transition would force teams to reduce hours which is counter productive in producing results that show at an international level as well as priceless experience for students that propel them far beyond where their peers would be in a collegiate or career setting.

3. Coaches are also a huge concern. As a long time coach and team mentor, I respectfully think that the prospect of coaching robotics in the athletic form proposed is incredibly unappealing for a multitude of reasons. This transition would inevitably make our jobs harder logistically and may outright force us out of the competitions we participate in. These events are hosted by external private organizations based out of state. Many coaches have expressed that their programs would need to close their doors due to this transition which is an obvious negative.

While the bill is clearly well intentioned at its core, I feel that it has ignored too many potential factors that will negatively impact access to STEM educational programs in the state of Hawaii to multiple levels of students. My recommendation as a coach, volunteer, and former competitor

is to oppose the measure for the time being so it can be refined and turned into a more productive form that provides more tangible benefits without jeopardizing over 25 years of hard work by our community.

**HB-2534-HD-1**
Submitted on: 3/17/2026 2:25:33 PM
Testimony for EDU on 3/20/2026 1:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---|---|---|---|
| Adria Fung | Individual | Oppose | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

To Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing the opportunity to provide opposition testimony to HB 2534.

My name is Adria Fung and I am the Robotics Education Specialist at Hawaii Space Grant Consortium (HSGC), a NASA-funded program administered through the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

I am a product of the Hawaii robotics pipeline and benefited directly from SLH 2007 Act 111, expanding STEM programs statewide. I joined my newly-started robotics team in 2007, and continued being part of the robotics team through my high school years. And ultimately because of my experience in robotics, was offered opportunities to intern at NASA Ames Research Center and study Robotics Engineering at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. During college, I returned home to teach robotics and engineering summer programs, which led to me pursue a career supporting robotics education across Hawaii.

Through my work at HSGC, I help support statewide robotics and STEM education connected to space science, small satellites, and aerospace technology, with a focus on developing future scientists and engineers across Hawaii.

As an educator, I encourage expanded investment in robotics education statewide, however I **do not support** classifying robotics as a sanctioned interscholastic sport. Competitive robotics programs operate within various frameworks, each with its own set of rules and regulations. For example, we have elementary, middle, and high school teams competing in the FIRST Lego League competition, Aerial Drone Competition, VEX Robotics Competition, to name a few. Currently, there are over 230 VEX Robotics teams on Oahu, Maui County, and Hawai‘i Island. Statewide, robotics participation includes approximately 450 teams, representing about 120 public, private, and charter schools, and more than 3,000 students.

Our program at HSGC supports statewide K-12 STEM education and workforce development, including supporting and overseeing the VEX Robotics programs and the annual Hawai‘i VEX State Championships, through partnerships with private sponsors and community organizations. If robotics were to be a sanctioned interscholastic sport, it may create complications for existing partners that currently support programs statewide.

Supporting statewide robotics education through academic and workforce development structures will better support long-term student outcomes while maintaining program quality.

Through my participation as a Hawai‘i robotics student, pursuing robotics engineering studies, and now giving back to support robotics education at home, I have seen the importance of robotics programs and how it can create meaningful pathways to college, careers, and workforce development.

Thank you for your consideration.

Adria Fung

Robotics Education Specialist

Hawai‘i Space Grant Consortium, University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa

**HB-2534-HD-1**
Submitted on: 3/17/2026 10:16:25 PM
Testimony for EDU on 3/20/2026 1:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bryan Silver | Individual | Oppose | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

**Position: Oppose classifying robotics as an interscholastic sport, Support robotics appropriations**

**Aloha Chair and Members of the Senate Committee ,**

I submit this testimony in opposition to classifying robotics as an interscholastic sport, and in strong support of stable state appropriations for K-12 robotics education. As currently written, this measure would place an undue burden on individual schools and on the community-based infrastructure that depends heavily on volunteers to establish, sustain, and operate robotics teams and events. Creating mandated tournaments under a sports model does not match how robotics currently functions in Hawai'i. Robotics does not fit neatly into a 14-week season or standard practice-time structure, and significant concessions would be required to preserve what is already working.

To host a single FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) event costs approximately $100,000, a sum that teams and organizers often spend an entire year raising. If robotics is made into a sport without dedicated financial support that does not reduce existing community resources, we would need to host not just one event, but also a state championship, requiring at least an additional $100,000. This is only one of nine robotics programs currently operating across the state.

We are currently hosting the Hawai'i tournament at St. Louis High School on Saturday and Sunday, March 21 and 22. I invite you to come and see firsthand what students across the islands are engaged in: authentic, technology-rich learning that develops the next generation of problem solvers, innovators, and collaborators.

**Here is another way we could benefit the community and get the recognition and support that is needed. Robotics is a high-impact academic program that builds engineering, computer science, math application, communication, and project management through hands-on problem solving. It strengthens Hawai‘i’s workforce pipeline and keeps students engaged in school through authentic, team-based challenges.**

**Why invest now**

**Statewide robotics participation includes approximately 450 teams and roughly 3,000 students across public, charter, and private schools, spanning programs such as FIRST, VEX, drones, and underwater robotics. Robotics creates clear pathways to college and careers, including scholarship opportunities, internships, and high-demand technical skills.**

**A proven approach already exists**

**Hawai‘i has previously seen growth through statewide investment models such as Act 111 and related efforts. The most effective strategy is direct investment in robotics as education and workforce development, with clear accountability and practical access to funds.**

**Why “sport” classification is the wrong mechanism**

**Robotics has competition, but its primary purpose is academic and workforce preparation. A “sport” structure can reduce participation and slow operations because it can introduce:**

- **Increased compliance and paperwork not aligned to academic programs**
- **Delays in purchasing and reimbursement that do not match short build seasons**
- **Restrictions that disadvantage charter, private, and nonprofit team models**
- **Risk of reduced outside sponsorship and community support under athletics-style governance**
- **Barriers for neighbor island teams and resource-limited schools**

**What funding should cover (high impact, directly supports students and educators)**
**Appropriations should be structured to reduce attrition and expand access by covering:**

- **Registration and event fees**
- **Startup kits, replacement parts, tools, and equipment**

- **Neighbor island travel support**
- **Coach and teacher stipends to recruit and retain advisors**
- **Professional development and continuing education for educators**

**Funding request (Finance focus)**

**To make statewide impact, I recommend $7 million over the three-year budgeting period, targeted to direct supports listed above, with guardrails to minimize administrative loss and maximize classroom and team-level benefit.**

**Recommended structure for distribution and accountability**

- **Establish a statewide robotics education grant program (not an interscholastic sport program)**
- **Keep DOE as the state agency, while authorizing distribution and event operations through proven partner organizations with financial controls and statewide capacity (examples include Hawai‘i Space Grant Consortium, Hawai‘i FIRST Robotics, and workforce partners such as DLIR)**
- **Ensure eligibility for public, charter, and private schools**
- **Require annual reporting on participation, neighbor island access, team retention, and student outcomes**

**Closing**

**I strongly oppose HB2534’s directive to classify robotics as a sport. Hawai‘i should invest in robotics through an education and workforce framework that maximizes participation and minimizes barriers. With this structural change, the bill can become a durable statewide solution that expands opportunity for keiki and strengthens Hawai‘i’s future workforce.**

**Mahalo for your consideration.**

**Educationally yours,**

**Bryan Silver**
**Engineering and Robotics Teacher, Kalani High School**
**FIRST Robotics Competition Regional Director, Hawai‘i**
**Hawai‘i State Teacher of the Year 2025**

**HB-2534-HD-1**
Submitted on: 3/17/2026 11:29:10 PM
Testimony for EDU on 3/20/2026 1:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---|---|---|---|
| Conner Birdsall | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

As a 17 year old high school senior, I strongly support this bill!

**HB-2534-HD-1**
Submitted on: 3/18/2026 1:06:24 PM
Testimony for EDU on 3/20/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I feel this is a great program for our students to grow and have healthy competition in.

**HB-2534-HD-1**
Submitted on: 3/18/2026 3:25:37 PM
Testimony for EDU on 3/20/2026 1:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---|---|---|---|
| Josiah Orso | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha my name is Josiah Orso and I am writing in support of HB2534. When I attended Holomua Elementary, I was not really into physical sports. So, when I heard of a school team using legos and robots to compete with other people, I was excited. I had fun competing and I felt like I was contributing to a team. After that, I also participated in robotics when I attended Hawai Technology Academy. With my participation in robotics, it led me to joining a program called GenCyber, which focused more on computer science and it got me interested in more STEM focused subjects, which allowed me to graduate with a degree related to cybersecurity at UH West Oahu. I believe passing this bill will allow more students to properly compete without worrying about not having enough money to fully participate in competitions around the country. Then those students can fully realize their potential and use it to elevate themselves more in college and beyond. Please support this bill!

**HB-2534-HD-1**
Submitted on: 3/18/2026 6:52:51 PM
Testimony for EDU on 3/20/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Chair Kim 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 STRONGLY SUPPORT BILL HB-2534 HD1.

As a veteran, I have seen firsthand how technology, teamwork, and disciplined training make the difference between success and failure. Modern military service relies heavily on robotics, automation, communications systems, and advanced engineering. By recognizing robotics as an interscholastic sport, this bill helps prepare our young adults for the real-world missions they will face in tomorrow's workforce and, for some, in tomorrow's uniformed service.

Robotics is not just about machines; it builds the same core values we cherish in the military and in our veterans' community: leadership, problem-solving under pressure, attention to detail, and the ability to work as a cohesive unit. Students in robotics programs stay after school, meet deadlines, troubleshoot failures, and represent their schools in high-stakes competitions—much like a unit preparing for and executing a mission. Recognizing robotics as a sport validates this commitment and signals that Hawaii values both physical and intellectual competition.

HB-2534 HD1 also responds to a very real threat: the loss of Hawaii's homegrown STEM talent to the mainland. As a veteran, I want to see our young people have the option to serve their country, then return home to well-paying technical careers here in Hawai'i, not be forced to leave the islands to find opportunity. Strengthening robotics across our schools is a practical way to build that pipeline. Many of the jobs that support national defense, cybersecurity, and critical infrastructure depend on the very skills that robotics teaches our students.

I especially appreciate that this bill acknowledges the financial and mentoring challenges that have caused some robotics teams to disappear. In the service, we never leave a teammate behind. In the same way, we should not leave schools and students behind simply because they lack the resources to sustain a robotics program. State support, as proposed in this bill, can be the difference between a struggling team folding and a new generation of leaders discovering their potential.

Finally, investing in robotics is an investment in resilience. Veterans understand that our nation's security and our state's security depend on a capable, technically literate citizenry. Today's robotics student could be tomorrow's engineer maintaining military equipment, cyber defender protecting our networks, or first responder using drones and robots in disaster relief. HB-2534 HD1 moves Hawai'i in the right direction by helping to cultivate that talent early.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to pass HB-2534 HD1. It honors the values that veterans fought to defend, service, excellence, and opportunity, and it gives our young adults the tools they need to lead in an increasingly technological world.

Mahalo

Brett Kulbis
U.S. Navy Retired

oceanit
innovation through engineering & scientific excellence

Written Statement of
**DR. PATRICK SULLIVAN**
**FOUNDER & CEO, OCEANIT**

Before the
**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

Friday, March 20, 2026
1:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 229 and Videoconference

In Support of
**HB2534 HD1 RELATING TO ROBOTICS**

To: Chair Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Senator Michelle Kidani and Members of the Committee

From: Dr. Patrick Sullivan, Founder & CEO, OCEANIT

Re: Testimony in Support of HB2534 HD1

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

Oceanit Laboratories, Inc. respectfully submits this testimony in strong support of HB2534 HD1, which appropriates funds to the Department of Education to establish robotics as an interscholastic sport. (This Bill complements and promotes recent legislation that recognized the importance of computer science in Hawaii's educational system. Act 51, passed in 2018, mandated that all public high schools offer at least one computer science course by the 2021-22 school year. Act 158, passed in 2021, expanded these computer science course requirements, mandating that elementary, middle and intermediate schools also offer computer science by the 2024-25 school year.)

Oceanit is a Hawai'i-born technology and innovation company celebrating 40 years of operation in the State. Headquartered in Honolulu, Oceanit employs scientists, engineers, and technologists across disciplines including artificial intelligence, advanced materials, environmental science, biotechnology, and aerospace. Our work spans federal and state contracts that address some of the most pressing challenges facing Hawaii and the nation. We are deeply invested in cultivating the next generation of STEM professionals, not only because it is the right thing to do, but because our State depends on it.

Oceanit strongly supports this measure for several reasons:

Robotics builds the exact skills our workforce needs: At Oceanit, we look for employees who combine technical proficiency with creative problem-solving, teamwork, and the ability to work under pressure toward a shared goal. These are precisely the competencies that robotics programs develop. Students who compete in FIRST and VEX Robotics learn to design, build, code, and iterate—skills that translate directly to

careers in engineering, data science, environmental monitoring, and the many other fields in which Oceanit operates.

Hawai‘i cannot afford to lose its STEM pipeline: As the bill notes, a higher percentage of Hawai‘i-born STEM graduates currently live on the continent than in Hawai‘i. This is a trend that threatens Hawai‘i’s economic diversification and long-term resilience. Every robotics team that dissolves due to lack of funding is a missed opportunity to inspire a student who might otherwise stay in Hawai‘i—or return after college—to build their career here. Recognizing robotics as an interscholastic sport provides the institutional support and consistent funding that these programs need to survive and grow.

Oceanit is ready to be a partner: We would welcome the opportunity to host robotics teams at our facilities so students can see firsthand the kinds of careers available to them right here in Hawai‘i. We want students to walk through our labs, meet our engineers, and understand that the skills they are learning in robotics competitions can lead to meaningful, well-paying careers right here at home. Whether through mentorship, facility tours, or internship opportunities, Oceanit is committed to helping make this program successful.

Federal funding uncertainty makes state investment essential: Recent federal funding cuts have already impacted several Hawai‘i robotics teams. Relying on competitive grants alone is not a sustainable model. By establishing robotics as a sanctioned interscholastic sport, the State provides a stable funding mechanism that ensures programs are not subject to the unpredictability of external grants. This is a smart, long-term investment in Hawai‘i’s workforce and economy.

As a company that has grown and thrived in Hawai‘i for four decades, Oceanit understands the importance of a robust local STEM workforce. HB2534 HD1 is a practical, forward-looking investment in our keiki and in the future of Hawai‘i’s innovation economy.

We respectfully urge the Committee to pass this measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**HB-2534-HD-1**
Submitted on: 3/19/2026 8:25:21 AM
Testimony for EDU on 3/20/2026 1:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---|---|---|---|
| Glen Kagamida | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

SUPPORT. MAHALO!

As a parent and a former teacher, I believe in and support Bill HB2534. I have seen how impactful robotics has improved the participates' chances to be much more competitive to get into prominent schools. I understand that robotics teachers and advisors will spend numerous hours after school and on weekends to teach, mentor, or supervise the students. On one occasion, I have observed some teachers mentoring students to work as a team towards a common goal, building a robot for an upcoming competition. Unlike some sports, I have also seen girls and boys working side by side in robotics to build a robot then compete as a team in various competitions.

If robotics become a sport or an event under the HHSAA, I can see how there can be great opportunities to expand the program and open more doors for more students to participate and learn stem, robotics, engineering, coding, and even design in various high school robotics clubs. As a former teacher, I can see how teaching stem or robotics in the class may be one consideration. I believe, however, for many students I taught, they excelled when there is area where they can demonstrate what they learn in an enjoyable, competitive and team building environment.

Again, that is why I support Bill HB2534. Without the bill, it will be disappointing to lose the program due to lack of qualified teachers or money

**HB-2534-HD-1**
Submitted on: 3/19/2026 12:11:29 PM
Testimony for EDU on 3/20/2026 1:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jethro Bumanglag | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Dear Chair Kim, Vice-Chair Kidani, and members of the committee:

Mahalo nui for the oppurtunity to submit testimony in strong support for House Bill 2534. As the federal administration continues to slash STEM programs, affecting the funding sources of several teams here in Hawai'i, it is necessary that robotics receives the recognition and funding to become a sport. In addition, this measure will strengthen the technology industry here in Hawai'i as we face witness more students leaving for the continental United States.

Mahalo

**HB-2534-HD-1**
Submitted on: 3/19/2026 12:14:09 PM
Testimony for EDU on 3/20/2026 1:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---|---|---|---|
| Victoria Higashihara | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I've seen how much robotics can build confidence, teamwork, and real-world skills, and it's really inspiring to watch. It gives students of Hawaii a chance to grow, work together, and discover strengths they might not even realize they have yet. That's why I care about supporting this program—because it creates meaningful opportunities for Hawaii youth and others to succeed.