



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

#### Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Education  
Tuesday, March 31, 2026 at 2:00 p.m.

By

Nathan Murata, Dean  
College of Education

and

Vassilis Syrmos, PhD  
Interim Provost

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HCR 187/HR 177- URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO BEGIN INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS TEACHER RETENTION IN THE STATE.

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

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments on HCR 187/HR 177 - Urging the Department of Education to begin initiatives to address teacher retention in the state. The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, College of Education believes that teacher retention strategies are necessary to address the teacher shortage.

Hawai'i Revised Statutes §304A-1202 established an advisory committee known as the Teacher Education Coordinating Committee (TECC) to identify, study, act, or make recommendations on matters of education of common interest to the Department and institutions of higher learning in Hawai'i. The committee, which includes all educator preparation programs across the state, has developed a five-year strategic plan that addresses three main objectives: capacity building within teacher preparation programs, increasing satisfaction among in-service teachers, and providing competitive compensation and incentives for recruitment and retention purposes. An annual report on its activities is required to be submitted to the Legislature annually.

UH respectfully notes that the TECC is able to serve the Hawai'i Department of Education as that conduit to address teacher retention strategies for the State of Hawaii. The TECC is co-chaired by the UH College of Education Dean and the Superintendent.

Mahalo for your continued commitment to Hawai'i's students and educators, and for considering these comments as you refine this important measure.



# KumuKonnnect

“Make nō ke kalo a ola i ka palili”

“The Taro may die but lives on in the young plants that it produces”

March 31, 2026

## Testimony in Support of HCR 187

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the Committee,

My name is Luke Nohea Gee, and I am an 11th grader from Kealakehe High School and the Co-founder and Executive Director of KumuKonnnect. I am writing on behalf of **KumuKonnnect** in support of House Concurrent Resolution 187, which urges the Department of Education to begin initiatives regarding teacher retention.

**KumuKonnnect** is a student-led, unofficial community organization dedicated to uplifting the teachers of Hawai'i from a youth perspective. We are a team of eight students from seven schools across the three islands. We speak directly with teachers and students about why teachers leave and the effects that has on our community

As students, we see firsthand how important teachers are to our education. Teachers are mentors, role models, and trusted adults who help us learn, grow, and prepare for our futures. Our teachers are the roots of entire communities, including those beyond school grounds. When schools struggle to keep teachers, our keiki feel the impact.

When I talk to teachers at my school, I most commonly hear about the economic and housing struggles of being a teacher. Many teachers at my school often have to live with 2-3 other teachers to pay for housing. Teachers teach because they care and they have passion. When economic barriers are present, teachers find ways to navigate them to pursue their passion for educating students. However, due to the high cost of living in Hawai'i, almost all teachers cannot live sustainably or comfortably.

HCR 187 moves the conversation forward by recognizing that housing is directly connected to teacher retention. It also makes sure that teachers and the community are part of the discussion instead of being left out of decisions that affect them.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,



# KumuKonnnect

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30 March 2026

## **Testimony in Support of HCR187/HR177**

### **Urging the Department of Education to begin initiatives to address teacher retention in the state**

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the Committee,

My name is Calliah Bolosan and I am an 11th grader from Waialua High & Intermediate School. I am writing in support of HCR187, which would urge the Department of Education to begin initiatives to address teacher retention in Hawai'i. As students, we see firsthand how important teachers are to our education. Teachers are mentors, role models, and trusted adults who help us learn, grow, and prepare for our futures. Our teachers are the roots of entire communities, including those beyond school grounds. When schools struggle to keep teachers, our keiki feel the impact.

Teachers act as the foundation for the Department of Education, providing the stability necessary for every other part of the system to function. When this foundation is weakened by factors like high costs of living, the entire structure of our education system begins to crumble. Schools aren't just losing employees; generations of students are losing the institutional knowledge, the extracurricular programs, and the personal connections that make school a safe and productive place for Hawai'i's keiki.

When teachers leave, it disrupts student learning and makes it harder for students to succeed. Strong relationships with teachers take time to build, and constant turnover affects both academic progress and emotional support. Supporting educators through raising awareness of teacher retention helps ensure that students like me have stable, experienced teachers who can focus on teaching instead of worrying about financial stress.

Investing in teachers is investing in students. When teachers are supported, students succeed. Stable schools create stronger communities across all islands.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,



**Calliah-Lei Pascua Bolosan**

**Secretary & Social Media Manager | KumuKonnnect**

**Stay Rooted With Us**

**Social: Instagram | Website**

**HR-177**

Submitted on: 3/29/2026 6:31:26 PM

Testimony for EDN on 3/31/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mele Kaneali'i	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Mele Kāneali'i, and I am a student from Maui and Moloka'i. I strongly support this resolution urging the DOE to take meaningful action to improve teacher retention across Hawai'i. Teachers are the anchors of our communities, yet many leave the profession due to high living costs, limited housing, heavy workloads, and low salaries, and these challenges are even more severe on the neighbor islands. I urge your strong support for this resolution and for initiatives that retain and uplift teachers across all of Hawai'i.

March 31, 2026

Testimony in Support of HCR 187  
Relating to Teacher Housing

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the Committee,

My name is **Mia Nishiguchi**, and I am a senior at **Kalani High School**. I am writing in support of HCR 187.

As a student, I see every day how important teachers are to our education. Teachers help us learn, prepare for the future, and support us both in and outside of the classroom. When teachers leave, it affects students. It becomes harder to build strong relationships with teachers when there is constant turnover. It also makes learning more difficult when classes keep changing teachers.

I have had personal conversations with students whose teachers left midyear. Those classes shifted from an abundance of learning to sitting in the cafeteria due to the “free period”. Instead of engaging in meaningful instruction, students were left without guidance, structure, or support. Over time, this doesn’t just affect academic scores; it affects **our** motivation, confidence, and belief in our own potential.

HCR 187 helps move this issue forward by recognizing that housing is directly connected to teacher retention. Supporting teachers means supporting students and supporting our schools.

I respectfully urge the committee to support HCR 187.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

**Mia Nishiguchi**  
**Kalani High School**

**HR-177**

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 12:51:33 PM

Testimony for EDN on 3/31/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Shani Carvalho	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Shani Carvalho, support HCR 187 to support and retain our educators in our schools to ensure that our students have a kumu year round that they can build pilina with to get the best educational experience possible. Mahalo.