



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

Date: 04/07/2026

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 308 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: FIN

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB2125, HD1, RELATING TO TEACHER LICENSING.

Purpose of Bill: Permits the Department of Education to hire unlicensed individuals as teachers on an emergency basis for five, rather than three, years. Requires that unlicensed teachers hired on an emergency basis make continuous and verifiable progress toward satisfying licensing requirements. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

Department's Position:

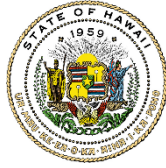
The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports SB 2125, SD 1, HD 1, which would extend the emergency hire teaching permit from three to five years.

Emergency Hire teachers are a foundational component of Hawaii's educator workforce. The Department relies on approximately 1,000 emergency hire teachers to meet teacher workforce needs. Hiring on an emergency basis has more than doubled over the last five years, and Neighbor Island schools continue to experience this at higher rates than Oahu – a pattern that reflects structural workforce conditions, not a temporary gap.

These individuals often bring valuable professional experience and strong community ties. The majority, however, arrive without prerequisites already in hand and must simultaneously complete admission requirements, secure financing, manage coursework, and fulfill a full-time teaching load. Currently, only one in three emergency hire teachers obtains a license under the current deadline.

Extending the permit to five years would give emergency hire teachers a realistic path to licensure and reduce the churn that falls hardest on Hawaii's most vulnerable schools. SB 2125, SD 1, HD 1 supports steady, documented progress toward licensure while protecting instructional quality and preserving the Department's investment in local recruitment.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 2125, SD 1, HD 1.



STATE OF HAWAII

Executive Office on Early Learning

Ke'ena Ho'okele Ho'ona'auao Pae Kamali'i o Hawai'i Moku'aina
2759 South King Street, Room C6
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

TO: Representative Chris Todd, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Yuuko Arikawa-Cross, Director
Executive Office on Early Learning

SUBJECT: Testimony on S.B. No. 2125, H.D. 1 – RELATING TO TEACHER LICENSING.

Committee: FIN
Date: Tuesday, April 7, 2026
Time: 2:00 p.m.
Location: Conference Room 308

Executive Office on Early Learning's Position: **SUPPORT**

The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) offers the following comments in support of S.B. 2125, H.D. 1, a bill that adjusts the length of time the Hawai'i State Department of Education (HIDOE) may employ emergency hire permit holders.

This measure aligns with the Early Learning Board's current framework of policy priorities, which are grounded in the Hawai'i Early Childhood State Plan. Specifically, the bill advances State Plan Building Block 4: Early Childhood Workforce, by providing additional flexibility to HIDOE, EOEL, and the Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission (HSPCSC) to meet the staffing needs of the public PreK system.

S.B. No. 2125, H.D. 1 addresses challenges faced by emergency permit holders seeking licensure within the current timeframe. This approach responds to workforce realities while maintaining a defined, time-limited permit structure, ensuring emergency hire permits continue to serve as temporary bridges to full licensure, not permanent or parallel hiring pathways.

Due to a unique set of circumstances, it is especially difficult for emergency permit holders working as Public PreK teachers to meet the current timeframe. Highly qualified EOEL Public PreK teachers are required to graduate from a State-Approved Teacher Education Program (SATEP) and hold a valid teaching license in Early Childhood Education. Demand for these

qualifications was minimal prior to the recent expansion of the Public PreK program, which began in 2023.

We continue to work with the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board and higher education partners to ensure pathways are responsive to this new demand. However, until the system adjusts, the options available for emergency permit holders teaching in EOEL public PreK classrooms who need to obtain a license in Early Childhood Education remain extremely limited. There are no post-baccalaureate programs in the State that lead to a teaching license in Early Childhood Education, which is often the fastest route to licensure. In addition, there is only one active Master's degree program in Hawai'i that leads to initial licensure in Early Childhood Education, offered by Chaminade University.

Informal feedback from emergency permit holders currently teaching in EOEL classrooms highlights both their strong commitment to the profession and the structural challenges they face in pursuing licensure. Many estimate it will take two to four years to complete their programs. Some reported pursuing a second bachelor's degree—not by choice, but due to limited alternative pathways. Teachers also described the difficulty of balancing full-time work, coursework, and family responsibilities. One shared that she is managing these demands while also serving in the Air Force Reserve. In addition, some teachers struggle to secure financial support for coursework outside the University of Hawai'i system, which is not currently eligible for the State's Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program.

Given these challenges, extending the permit limit to five years would meaningfully reduce pressure, allowing them to better balance coursework with full-time teaching responsibilities and personal obligations as they pursue licensure.

We appreciate the Legislature's ongoing investment and shared commitment to strengthening Hawai'i's early learning system for our youngest keiki and their 'ohana. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of S.B. No. 2125, H.D. 1.



1200 Ala Kapuna Street • Honolulu, Hawai'i 96819
Tel: (808) 833-2711 • Fax: (808) 839-7106 • Web: www.hsta.org

Osa Tui, Jr.
President

Logan Okita
Vice President

Cheney Kaku
Secretary-Treasurer

Andrea Eshelman
Executive Director

TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Item: SB 2125, SD1, HD1 – Relating to Teacher Licensing

Position: Support

Hearing: Tuesday, April 7, 2026, 2:00 pm, Room 308

Submitter: Osa Tui, Jr., President - Hawai'i State Teachers Association

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the committee,

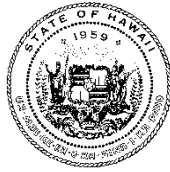
The Hawai'i State Teachers Association **supports** S.B. 2125, SD1, HD1 to help address the state's persistent teacher shortage. By extending the employment limit for emergency hires from three to five years, this bill allows schools to retain dedicated educators who are already established in their classrooms but may need additional time to complete the licensing process.

This change provides much-needed stability for students and schools without compromising professional standards. Completing a licensure program—which often includes student teaching and rigorous exams—is incredibly difficult while managing a full-time classroom workload. Under the existing law, a teacher who is performing well but has not completed every requirement by the end of their third year will be let go.

Extending the timeline will allow the education system to capitalize on the valuable experience an emergency hire has gained. It also helps circumvent the difficulties associated with vacant positions and the use of long-term substitutes.

S.B. 2125, SD1, HD1 maintains important protections by ensuring unlicensed individuals are only hired when no licensed teacher is available. It also preserves transparency through regular reporting to the board regarding the progress of these hires and the status of teacher shortages across the state.

Mahalo.



STATE OF HAWAII
HAWAII TEACHER STANDARDS BOARD
650 IWILEI ROAD, SUITE 268
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96817

April 7, 2026

WRITTEN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

PERSON TESTIFYING: Mitzie Higa, Licensing Specialist, on behalf of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB)

DATE: April 7, 2026

TIME: 2:00 PM

LOCATION: Conference Room 308 and Video Conference

TITLE OF BILL: SB 2125 SD1,HD1 Teacher Licensing; Emergency Hire; Exemptions; Licensure Progress

POSITION: Opposes SB 2125 SD1,HD1

Chair Chris Todd, and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) respectfully opposes SB2125,SD1, HD1 which permits the Department of Education to hire unlicensed individuals as teachers on an emergency basis for five, rather than three, years. Requires that unlicensed teachers hired on an emergency basis make continuous and verifiable progress toward satisfying licensing requirements.

HTSB wants to point out that the Emergency Hire Permit was created with the intention to be an exception, not the norm. This is evident in the criteria set forth by statute. It was created for hard-to-fill areas, and individuals were given three years to become licensed. **The purpose of Chapter 302A is to have licensed, qualified teachers teaching our public school children in Hawai'i. The three-year mark was to ensure that individuals would enter a State Approved Teacher Education Program (SATEP) as soon as possible while getting paid as a full-time teacher. A SATEP for an Emergency Hire teacher, does not take three years to complete.** Since they already need a bachelor's degree as part of the requirements for an Emergency Hire Permit, their SATEP will be a graduate degree, so it will take 1-2 years. **If exigent circumstances beyond the individuals' control prevent them from obtaining licensure within three years, the Hawai'i Administrative Rules already allow HTSB to suspend the rules and grant the individual a fourth Emergency Hire Permit. Also, those with J-1 Visas, or those who attended a State Approved Teacher Education Program on the mainland, who already have a teaching degree, just need to pass their Praxis tests, and what they really need, that HIDOE is now offering this year, is study help for these exams.**

Applicants may take and pass these Praxis exams, before they apply for a license, or within their first year, and then become a licensed teacher, and earn a higher salary because of it.

The HTSB is able to issue licenses, provided that the applicant meets the criteria set forth by law. Under the current policy those who have met the licensure requirements have been issued the appropriate licenses.

HTSB is tasked by law to establish licensing and certification standards that govern teacher licensing and certification in Hawai'i, ensuring that public school children are taught by teachers who are qualified to engage in the teaching profession without negatively impacting their pupils' educational process.

HTSB is only administratively attached to the Hawai'i Department of Education (HIDOE). **The legislature intentionally separated HTSB from the HIDOE to ensure that the licensing body would not be the same department or entity as the employer, as this would pose an inherent conflict of interest.** This bill deprives HTSB of its ability and autonomy to establish its own licensing and certification standards and instead mandates HTSB to lower its licensing requirements, including allowing the extension of Emergency Hire Permits from the current three years to five years, as this bill proposes.

HTSB notes that, while this bill was well-intentioned, it is not the answer to the problem. Part of the solution could be for individuals interested in teaching in our state to take their Praxis exams before they even come to the U.S., as Praxis is international and offers testing options they may be able to use before coming to the U.S. In fact, some individuals have started taking at least one Praxis test before they move here. The Praxis tests J-1 visa holders struggle with most are the Praxis Core Reading and Writing tests, which are foundational skills aligned with our standards and taught in our schools. **Currently, 34 J1 Visa holders with Emergency Hire Permits have also been placed in classrooms that are outside their teaching license in their home country.** For example, an individual might be licensed in their country in Secondary Mathematics, but in Hawai'i, they have been placed in a 2nd-grade elementary classroom. **This is concerning for our students who need the foundational reading and writing skills.** We are glad that HIDOE is now offering Praxis study support for these J-1 Visa holders, as they all need to take the Praxis Core, and the reading and writing tests are what they struggle with most. It has been reported that principals have also been reimbursing them for passed Praxis tests, but this is at the principal's discretion and depends on their Title II funding.

This bill will only delay the completion of a SATEP for our teachers with Emergency Hire Permits in a timely manner and cause students in our public school system to be without a qualified, licensed teacher for five (5) years instead of three (3).

HTSB's position is grounded in our Vision of a highly esteemed public education system supported by rigorous professional teacher standards that foster student success, and **our Mission to collaboratively set high licensing and credentialing standards that:**

1. Ensure every child in Hawai'i has a qualified teacher
2. Promote professionalism and teaching excellence
3. Build public confidence in the teaching profession
4. Strengthen accountability to the public

Extending Emergency Hire Permits beyond three years directly conflicts with these commitments.

High-quality, equitable education depends on **well-prepared teachers** who are equipped to persevere and grow during their early years in the classroom. **Research and experience show that teachers who enter**

through fast-track or alternative routes, particularly in urban districts, often begin underprepared and leave the profession at higher rates. Our state’s Emergency Hire Permit structure is designed to mitigate this by requiring individuals to pursue an official teaching degree within the three-year window, or if they are teachers with a degree, but received their teaching degree from an out-of-state or an out-of-country institution, then they just need to pass the Praxis tests for Core, Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT), and Content.

To qualify for an Emergency Hire Permit, individuals must already hold a bachelor’s degree. Completing a post-baccalaureate program or master’s degree typically requires only one to two years, well within the existing three-year timeframe. Extending the permit to five years would allow individuals with any bachelor’s degree, even in unrelated fields such as fashion design, to teach in our elementary or special education classrooms, or any classroom, for a longer period without completing the essential pedagogical preparation.

These facts are especially concerning because Emergency Hire teachers are most often placed in elementary and special education classrooms, where strong foundations in literacy, numeracy, differentiated instruction, and support for multilingual learners are critical. In some cases, students have had Emergency Hire teachers every year of elementary school. As we continue to address learning loss from the COVID-19 years, further lowering preparation expectations would compound existing challenges.

We should learn from other states, such as Texas, that reduced their qualification standards and licensing requirements for Emergency Hire Permits, and are now experiencing negative consequences from those policy shifts, including student learning loss, which is very concerning. [[Responding to the Data How Texas Is Re-thinking Teacher Certification.pdf](#)] Hawai’i should not follow that path. Doing so would be a disservice not only to our keiki, but also to individuals who aspire to become fully licensed, highly qualified teachers in our communities.

While Hawai’i faces significant teacher shortages—ranging from 1,000 to 1,200 vacancies at the start of each school year—lowering standards or requirements for licensure, or extending the number of years an individual may teach with only an Emergency Hire Permit, is not the solution. Instead, our state should invest in strategies that strengthen the profession, including:

- Supporting ways to teacher retention [[Teacher Turnover in the United States: Patterns, Drivers, and Policy Strategies | Learning Policy Institute](#)]-noting teacher turnover was higher among AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER teachers who were not fully certified (20.1%) than among fully certified teachers (14.7%). Among teachers with 1–3 years of experience, not fully certified teachers left at rates about 40% higher than fully certified teachers (24% vs. 17%).

According to this recent research, the factors are most strongly associated with teacher turnover. (Which accounts for why we have such a shortage here in Hawai’i. If we could retain our teachers, we wouldn’t have such a large teacher shortage each year. According to recent research in Hawai’i, over 50% of our teachers do not stay in the classroom beyond 5 years. Thus, if we are able to retain our teachers, we will not have this large a shortage of teachers)

In this particular research, it is noted that after accounting for teacher and school characteristics, three factors are most strongly associated with turnover:

- **Compensation:** Higher pay is linked to higher retention. On average, with every \$1,000 increase in salary (adjusted for cost of living), the probability of turnover decreased by about 0.34 percentage points.
- **School leadership:** Teachers who report having more effective and supportive leadership are significantly more likely to stay in their schools. Turnover rates were cut in half when comparing teachers who reported low versus high levels of leadership effectiveness and supports (18.7% vs. 9.0%).
- **Job and workplace satisfaction:** Teachers with high job and workplace satisfaction were significantly less likely to leave their schools than teachers with low satisfaction (8.0% vs. 22.0%).

Another way that the employer may help with retention is by increasing mentoring and induction support, especially for those with Emergency Hire Permits

These findings underscore the association between teacher turnover and compensation and working conditions. Although compensation is not under the purview of HTSB, we have tried to build on teacher retention by;

- Expanding National Board Certified Teacher pathways (which HTSB is successfully doing)
- Writing a SAEF Grant, and receiving federal funding, for the implementation of a Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program with structured guidance and tuition support (a program where Teacher candidates can earn while they learn, without having to pay for tuition, which would mean no student loans and higher pay as a full-time salaried teacher).
 - Under the guidance of the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (“DLIR”) HTSB wrote the Standards of Apprenticeship for K-12, using DLIR’s template and federal and state requirements for an apprenticeship program. The Standards of Apprenticeship for K-12 Teachers were adjusted with input from the unions involved.
 - The State Apprenticeship Council approved the Standards of Apprenticeship for K-12 teachers, pending the required Consult and Confer process between the employer (HIDOE) and the unions, the Hawai’i State Teachers Association (HSTA), and the Hawai’i Government Employees Association (HGEA). While HTSB is not a party to the Consult and Confer meetings, as the sponsor, not the employer, HTSB was invited by the employer to attend some meetings and assisted HIDOE in answering questions posed by HSTA afterward, which were not questions raised at those meetings. This included answering questions about federal and state regulations required for apprenticeships and the SAEF grant for employers. The HGEA responded to HIDOE that they were satisfied with the Consult and Confer meetings, but will wait for HSTA to sign the Standards of Apprenticeship for K-12 Teachers. The Director of DLIR will not sign the Standards until the Consult and Confer process has ended and the unions have signed off on the Standards, which is norm with Registered Apprenticeship Programs.
 - HTSB, as the sponsor of the \$4.62 million SAEF grant, cannot spend SAEF grant funds and implement the program until the Consult and Confer process has been resolved and parties

have signed the Standards. HSTA and HGEA will have continual opportunities to conduct Impact Bargaining after the signing of the Standards. The SAEF Grant is the federal funding source, and the Standards of Apprenticeship for K-12 Teachers is the guide for implementing the program. Once the Standards are signed, HTSB will be allowed to use SAEF Grant federal funding to offer subgrants to UH Colleges to pay the tuition for their students who are or will be entering State Approved Teacher Education Programs (SATEPs) and are employed by our Hawai'i Public Schools. These students who are currently employed as Educational Assistants (EAs) or Teacher Assistants (TAs) by HIDOE will eventually become qualified teachers employed by HIDOE, which is one solution to the teacher shortage problem. Further, HIDOE has agreed to pay these individuals who are selected for the Registered Apprenticeship Program as EAs since HIDOE needs EAs. These students are recognized as members of the HGEA and per the Standards will be part of their collective bargaining unit and any salary scale shall be determined by the collective bargaining contract in place

The approaches listed above uphold qualified teachers while addressing workforce needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. For the reasons stated above, the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board respectfully **asks the Committee to oppose this bill.**

SB-2125-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 2:09:46 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
amy agbayani	The Legal Clinic	Support	In Person

Comments:

Testimony in support submitted by

Amy Agbayani, President The Legal Clinic

The Legal Clinic is a non-profit organization that provides legal representation and support for low-income immigrants. We strongly support sb2125 that permits emergency hire teachers to teach for 5 years. The 5 year duration would apply to all emergency hire teachers including J-1 visa teachers consistent with the 5 year duration of an educators J-1 visas.

The bill will help Hawai'i address teacher shortages by providing competent teachers particularly where there are shortages in various geographic areas and disciplines. The Department of Education currently has over 200 J-1 visa teachers from the Philippines and administrators attest the program helps meet teacher shortages and the teachers perform valuable service to their students. My personal contact with some of these teachers and comments from my community contacts makes me confident that these teachers and the students are well-served.

These J-1 visa teachers can serve at any of the public schools and can teach in multicultural classrooms. It is also important to note that they were assigned to some schools with high proportion of local and immigrant Filipino students. As noted, Filipino students are the largest ethnic group in the public schools and immigrants from the Philippines represent the largest country of origin group, making up nearly half—or 45.8 percent—of all immigrants in Hawai'i

We support this bill as it will benefit our schools by having emergency hire teachers, including Visiting International Educators available to teach for 5 years.

Mahalo. Amy Agbayani



COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Rep. Chris Todd, Chair

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Tuesday, April 7, 2026 at 2:00 pm

Via Videoconference and Conference Room 308

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2125, SD1, HD1 - RELATING TO TEACHER LICENSING.

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, Rep. Miyake and Rep. Yamashita of Maui, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Veronica Mendoza, Founding Executive Director of Roots Reborn and a founding coalition member of El Pueblo en Acción (EPA) Maui - *The People in Action Maui*. Roots Reborn **strongly supports SB 2125, SD1, HD1**, Relating To Teacher Licensing, which permits the Department of Education to hire unlicensed individuals as teachers on an emergency basis for five, rather than three, years, and requires that unlicensed teachers hired on an emergency basis make continuous and verifiable progress toward satisfying licensing requirements.

Roots Reborn is a grassroots, multicultural immigrant-justice and disaster-response organization serving migrant and immigrant communities on Maui and beyond. Born out of the August 2023 wildfires, we immediately stepped in to move aid, navigate systems alongside families, and build the trusted relationships that still anchor our work today. What began as wildfire response has grown into essential infrastructure for immigrant communities facing overlapping crises—from recovery and housing instability to shifting federal policies, increased enforcement, and rising fear.

In our work we have identified risks to our community presented by unnecessary barriers, such as the current limitations for a visiting international educator permit for educators on the J-1 visa program caused by the limit of emergency hires to three years. The federal J-1 program offers foreign teachers an opportunity to teach grades K - 12 in accredited schools, and federal standards provide for a three year visa term that can be extended to five years if certain criteria are met. Senate Bill 2125, SD1, HD1, would make it easier for foreign teachers to extend their visa status from three to five years.

Senate Bill 2125, SD1, HD1 seeks to extend from three to five years the period for which emergency hire teachers may be employed by the Department of Education, facilitating J-1 visa extensions from three to five years, helping foreign teachers stay at our schools longer, reducing turnover and building more integrated school communities. For this reason, Roots Reborn respectfully requests that you vote **in support of SB 2125, SD1, HD1**.

Sinceramente,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Veronica', written over a white background.

Veronica Mendoza

Maui Roots Reborn, *Founding Executive Director*

El Pueblo en Accion Maui, *Founding Coalition Member*



Testimony in Support of HB1825 / SB2616 and HB1840 / SB2125

Submitted by: The Teacher Lounge Team

Position: Support

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB1825 / SB2616 and HB1840 / SB2125.

Our organization works closely with schools and educators across Hawai'i, including J-1 teachers who are actively serving in classrooms while working toward full licensure. These educators play a critical role in maintaining instructional continuity, particularly in rural, neighbor island, and high-need schools where staffing challenges are most acute.

These teachers are fully committed to Hawai'i's students and are making documented progress toward licensure. However, the current licensure and permit timelines often do not reflect the practical barriers educators face. Required licensure exams involve multiple components that take significant time to prepare for, schedule, and complete successfully. The cumulative cost of exams and preparation materials can exceed \$1,000, creating a substantial financial burden.

Access challenges further complicate the process. On neighbor islands, limited in-person testing capacity can result in long delays that are outside a teacher's control. Virtual testing options are often not viable due to testing restrictions, technology limitations, or living situations that do not meet strict testing environment requirements.

When permit limits are rigidly applied without accounting for these realities, effective teachers may be forced to leave classrooms despite making steady progress toward licensure. This disrupts student learning, strains school communities, and can discourage educators from continuing to serve in Hawai'i.

While the J-1 teacher program allows educators to serve for up to five years, in practice the combined effects of licensure timelines, testing access, and permit limitations often reduce effective classroom service to no more than three years. This shortened window limits schools' ability to retain experienced teachers and undermines the stability that students and school communities need, as well as limits the cultural exchange and soft diplomacy impact of the J-1 teacher exchange program.

Students benefit most from stability—when teachers are able to remain in their classrooms long enough to build relationships, strengthen instructional practice, and support school culture. Policies that allow reasonable flexibility while maintaining licensure standards help ensure that schools can retain qualified, committed educators while safeguarding educational quality.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge your support of HB1825 / SB2616 and HB1840 / SB2125. Mahalo for your consideration and for your continued commitment to Hawai'i's students and schools.

Respectfully submitted,
The Teacher Lounge Team

Your Global Teaching Network

www.teacherlounge.org

SB-2125-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 8:28:10 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tim Huycke	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB2125.

SB-2125-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 9:02:47 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dwight T. Martin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a Hawaii resident, registered voter, and member of IndivisibleHawaii.

I am in support of SB2125 SD1 which would amend Section 302A-804 of the HRS concerning the hiring of unlicensed individuals as teachers on an emergency basis. This bill would remove a three year limit on the emergency hires and extend the maximum time to five years during which the person is making progress toward obtaining a teaching certificate. This would harmonize the J-1 visa timelines with the emergency teacher timeline.

With our statewide teacher shortage, we need the teaching support of noncitizens who are here with J-1 visa status, and should the maximum time these persons can provide education to our K-12 keiki while they are meeting the requirements for a teaching certificate is good planning.

Thank you.

SB-2125-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 8:54:52 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lily Troy MD	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I urge you to pass SB2125 SD1

SB-2125-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 11:20:00 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gail Morrison	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of SB2125 SD1 both personally and as a member of the Indivisible Hawaii Statewide Network (IHSN). This Bill would amend Section 302A-804 of the HRS concerning the hiring of unlicensed individuals as teachers on an emergency basis. This bill would remove a three year limit on the emergency hires and extend the maximum time to five years during which the person is making progress toward obtaining a teaching certificate. This would harmonize the J-1 visa timelines with the emergency teacher timeline.

Foreign teachers are an important part of the response to our extreme teacher shortage. Several hundred positions are presently filled with noncitizens who are here with J-1 visa status. Extending the maximum time these persons can provide education to our K-12 keiki while they are meeting the requirements for a teaching certificate is good planning.

I urge you to pass SB2125 SD1

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Gail Morrison, Honolulu

SB-2125-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 12:28:45 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jesse Hutchison	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm writing in strong support. Thank you!

SB-2125-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 2:09:37 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brodie Lockard	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

SB-2125-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 4:42:31 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kehaulani Coleman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you

SB-2125-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 4:52:13 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
john savino	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of SB2125 SD1

SB-2125-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 5:18:55 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristy Gund	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB2125 SD1 to extend the maximum limit on emergency hires of teachers to five years, which aligns with the J-1 visa timelines. Teacher shortages are more easily remedied when our laws and statutes and guidelines are clear, fair, and robust. Education is the foundation to a stronger society.

As a private citizen and member of the Indivisible Hawaii Statewide Network (IHSN), I appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Mahalo

SB-2125-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/5/2026 9:12:10 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jane Aquino	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of SB2125 SD1 both personally and as a member of the Indivisible Hawaii Statewide Network (IHSN). This Bill would amend Section 302A-804 of the HRS concerning the hiring of unlicensed individuals as teachers on an emergency basis. This bill would remove a three year limit on the emergency hires and extend the maximum time to five years during which the person is making progress toward obtaining a teaching certificate. This would harmonize the J-1 visa timelines with the emergency teacher timeline.

Foreign teachers are an important part of the response to our extreme teacher shortage. Several hundred positions are presently filled with noncitizens who are here with J-1 visa status. Extending the maximum time these persons can provide education to our K-12 keiki while they are meeting the requirements for a teaching certificate is good planning.

I urge you to pass SB2125 SD1

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter. Jane Aquino, Indivisible Hawaii

SB-2125-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/5/2026 10:45:08 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Younghee Overly	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for this opportunity to support SB2125.

Younghee Overly, a member of Indivisible Hawaii

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Rep. Chris Todd, Chair
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Tuesday, April 7, 2026 at 2:00 pm
Via Videoconference and Conference Room 308

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB2125, SD1, HD1 - RELATING TO TEACHER LICENSING.

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, Rep. Miyake for my Maui district, Rep. Yamashita of Maui, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Christine Andrews, and I live in Wailuku, Maui. I am an attorney licensed in Hawaii for over 25 years. Early in my career I worked for many years at the Maui Economic Development Board's Women in Technology Project on gender equity in STEM as a workforce development issue. I focused on issues in recruitment and retention and wrote over ten peer-reviewed papers on best practices in the field.

I submit this testimony to you today in **strong support of SB 2125, SD1, HD1**, Relating to Teacher Licensing, which permits the Department of Education to hire unlicensed individuals as teachers on an emergency basis for five, rather than three, years and requires that unlicensed teachers hired on an emergency basis make continuous and verifiable progress toward satisfying licensing requirements.

One of the key workforce development areas I identified in my work with K-12 teachers and administrators and with professors and administrators of our institutions of higher education in Hawaii was the gaps in the education-to-workforce pipeline. This is an issue that we continue to see today when it comes to the education, recruitment and retention of teachers. Before attending law school, I attended the College of Education at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, concurrently with a subject matter Master's degree program, to obtain a professional degree in teaching. I completed the coursework and practicum for the professional degree in teaching, but, in order to get a teaching license, at the time, required a one-year, unpaid, teaching practicum with the Department of Education. I could not afford to work for free for a year, so I went to work in a different field which later led me to law school.

That someone like me, who worked full-time while pursuing both a subject-matter Master's degree and a professional degree in teaching, should have switched career tracks away from teaching, after two years of graduate work, because of practical, economic barriers highlighted for me the education-to-workforce barriers between the College of Education at UHM and the Hawaii State Department of Education that contribute to our teacher shortage to this day. While this bill does not address all the barriers, and I would encourage the Committee to question the College and Department on that issue, I do wonder whether the content of this bill would have allowed me to make other choices.

A friend of my daughter's is an energetic and engaging young man with a Bachelor's Degree in Chemistry from the University of California. He does not have a teaching degree, he has a subject-matter degree in chemistry. After getting his degree in chemistry, he wanted to explore teaching science as a career, and applied as an emergency hire to teach science at Baldwin High School in Wailuku, Maui. In another sign of the dysfunction at the Department of Education, this young man was hired about one week before school started, although he had applied months prior. He had no classroom management experience, there were no curricular materials provided, and yet, under the mentorship of the head of the Baldwin Science Department, he fully embraced his new job.

His first year as an emergency hire science teacher was not without its bumps in the road, but I had the wonderful opportunity to watch him as he found “his calling.” He would come home from school almost every day and say, “I love my job!” Over a year later, he still does. He understood that, under the current law, he would need to get his teaching license within three years to keep this job that he loved. He is currently just over a year and a half into his teaching career. Unfortunately, because he was hired just before the school year started, the uncertainty and timing interfered with his ability to immediately register for teaching degree programs within the UH system designed for emergency hires like him.

It is also hard to get a teaching degree within the UH system as a full-time neighbor island teacher. When the end of his first year teaching at Baldwin was complete, there was some difficulty for him in retaining his position, even though the head of the Science Department was leaving for another school and there seemed that there would be no experienced science teachers at Baldwin for the coming year. Part of the barrier for him was that he was not yet enrolled in a teaching degree program, again due to the timing issues with the UH system, and there was pressure now for him to complete the UH system teaching degree within three years, so he instead enrolled in a more costly online teaching degree program out of state so he could keep his job. This is how the current three-year limit for emergency hires can create a barrier for people who want to stay and teach as a profession in Hawaii.

It has been a great experience to witness someone who, like me, wants to pursue a teaching career here in Hawaii. We have chronic shortages of teachers, filled now with teachers on J-1 visas. It is important to have skilled, knowledgeable, professional teachers. Allowing people like my friend five rather than three years to complete their teaching degree is more practical, especially for neighbor island emergency hires who are teaching full time. **I request your support of SB 2125, SD1, HD1**, because it will allow people, especially neighbor islanders, with desirable subject-matter degrees a more appropriate amount of time to get their teaching degree so that they can remain in their schools, avoid them having to pay for expensive online programs instead of going through the UH system simply because of a shortage of time under the current law, and help build the pipeline of experienced teachers like my friend to provide an excellent education for our students.

Thank you for your time and for supporting teachers and students by supporting SB 2125, SD1, HD1.

Mahalo nui,

Christine L. Andrews, J.D.

SB-2125-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 8:54:37 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James E Raymond	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you. I am a member of Indivisible Windward.

SB-2125-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 9:38:36 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Taffi Wise	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

Please ensure charter school teacher receive the same 5 year exemption as the DOE teachers.

Mahalo nui!