



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

**Date:** 03/19/2026  
**Time:** 02:00 PM  
**Location:** 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE  
**Committee:** EDN

**Department:** Education

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

**Title of Bill:** SB2125, SD1, 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. (SD1)

**Department's Position:**

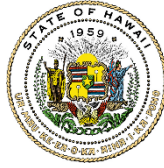
The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports SB 2125, SD 1, which would extend the emergency-hire teaching permit from 3 to 5 years.

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 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.



**STATE OF HAWAII**

**Executive Office on Early Learning**

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

**TO:** Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair  
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Education

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

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

Committee: EDN  
Date: Thursday, March 19, 2026  
Time: 2:00 p.m.  
Location: Conference Room 309

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, S.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.

EOEL appreciates the Senate Education Committee's amendments to extend, rather than eliminate, the time limit. We support the approach in the S.D. 1, which maintains a defined, time-limited permit structure and accountability for progress toward licensure while responding to workforce realities. It preserves emergency hire permits as temporary bridges to full licensure, not permanent or parallel hiring pathways.

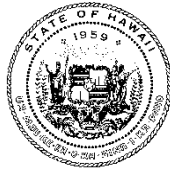
Highly qualified EOEL Public PreK teachers must have graduated from a State-Approved Teacher Education Program (SATEP) and hold a teaching license in Early Childhood Education, a unique set of qualifications for which there had been no significant demand prior to the recent expansion of the Public PreK program.

As the system adjusts to the increase in new early learning employment opportunities, some candidates encounter challenges obtaining an initial Early Childhood Education license due to the limited number of approved pathways and the timing of enrollment opportunities for existing programs. This is particularly challenging for educators who already hold a Bachelor's or Master's degree in early childhood education from a non-SATEP program.

Extending the permit period to five years would better align with the availability and timing of existing Early Childhood Education licensure programs. It also provides a more achievable timeline for individuals pursuing licensure while working full-time and supporting their families, and helps retain teachers in the classroom while they work through the process.

We continue to work with the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board and higher education partners to ensure that pathways are responsive to this new demand, while reinforcing the shared goal of a fully licensed, well-prepared educator workforce.

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 share these comments in support of S.B. No. 2125, S.D. 1.



**STATE OF HAWAII**

**HAWAII TEACHER STANDARDS BOARD**

650 IWILEI ROAD, SUITE 268

HONOLULU, HAWAII 96817

March 19, 2026

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

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

**DATE:** March 19, 2026

**TIME:** 2:00 pm

**LOCATION:** Conference Room 309 and Video Conference

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

**POSITION:** Opposes SB 2125SD1

**Chair Justin Woodson, and Members of the House Committee on Education:**

**The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) respectfully opposes SB2125, SD1**, 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 as is the norm, as it was intended.**

In order to qualify for an Emergency Hire Permit (EHP), the individual must possess a bachelor's degree and be enrolled in a SATEP. Completion of a SATEP as an EHP holder should take 1-2 years since the individual would have already obtained a bachelor's degree. In the event that the individual is unable to meet the requirements for licensure before the expiration of the individual's third EHP, there is a mechanism in place through the Hawaii Administrative Rules that would allow the individual an additional fourth EHP provided the individual meets the criteria set forth by law.

For individuals who possess a J-1 Visa, have completed a State Approved Teacher Education Program on the mainland or internationally, and hold a teaching degree, all that is required is passing the Praxis tests. The Hawaii Department of Education (HIDOE) is already providing preparatory Praxis exam assistance to J-1 Visa holders, and it would be beneficial for EHP holders to receive the same assistance so they can pass their Praxis tests sooner and become licensed earlier, which would lead to higher salaries.

**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.**

**Other states that have reduced their qualification standards are now experiencing negative consequences from those policy shifts. More data may be found here-[\[Responding to the Data How Texas Is Re-thinking Teacher Certification.pdf\]](#) 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 is not the solution. Instead, our state should invest in strategies that strengthen the profession, including:**

1. Supporting ways to teacher retention
2. Paying off student loans for SATEPs for Hawai'i public school teachers
3. Expanding National Board Certified Teacher pathways

4. **Increasing mentoring and induction support, especially for those with Emergency Hire Permits**
5. **Providing study sessions for those who need to pass Praxis tests for initial licensure**
6. **Implementing a Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program with structured guidance and tuition support (Teacher candidates can earn while they learn, without having to pay for tuition, thus they will not accumulate student loans)**

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.**



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 EDUCATION

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

**Position: Support**

**Hearing: Thursday, March 19, 2025, 2:00 pm, Room 309**

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

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association **supports** S.B. 2125, SD1 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 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.



**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**

Date: March 19, 2026

Time: 2:00pm

Location: 309

Committee: Education

**TO:** Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the House Committee on Education

**FROM:** Barbara Oura Tavares

**DATE:** March 18, 2026

**RE:** Testimony in STRONG SUPPORT of SB2125 SD1 - Teacher Licensing

**POSITION:** STRONG SUPPORT

My name is Barbara Oura Tavares, and I am the Principal of Lihikai Elementary School on the island of Maui. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in strong support of SB2125 SD1, which would allow the Department of Education to hire unlicensed individuals as teachers on an emergency basis for five years, rather than the current three years.

This extension is a vital and reasonable alternative to help maximize our applicant pool and fill the many vacant K-12 teacher positions across our state. Developing and growing people—both students and teachers—is a responsibility I am privileged to have and take very seriously, as it is how I can help build a stronger, more robust community here on Maui. Supporting this bill allows us to protect the investments we have made in our educators.

Please consider the following impacts this bill will have on our schools, particularly on the neighbor islands:

- **Realistic Timelines for Certification:** Teaching full-time is an incredibly demanding job. This bill gives viable candidates the necessary time to acclimate to these demands while simultaneously studying and preparing for the multiple rigorous exams required to earn a Hawaii State Teachers License. Finding your rhythm and becoming a highly effective educator takes time.
- **Support for International J1 Teachers:** Neighbor island schools have increasingly come to rely on international J1 teachers. It is important to note that these professionals are fully licensed and trained in their home countries; however, their licenses are currently unrecognized by the Hawaii Teachers Standards Board. It takes time for foreign educators to acculturate to life in a new country and to navigate a brand-new educational system.

- **Retention of Hardworking, Dedicated Staff:** At Lihikai Elementary, I currently have 13 J1 teachers. They are strong, resilient people who approach each day with a growth mindset, reflecting their intention and resolve to be successful, licensed teachers in Hawaii. I see them working diligently every single day to improve their educational effectiveness and build strong relationships with students, families, and colleagues. They have become deeply valued members of our school community.

Unfortunately, under the current three-year limitation, we are facing a heartbreaking reality. I have teachers who are just shy of successfully completing their Praxis exams who will be forced to return to the Philippines this June. They are not leaving because they want to, but simply because the clock has run out on their emergency hire status.

These emergency-hired individuals are some of the most determined and hardest-working people I know, and they teach with so much heart. We have invested heavily in them—both in and out of the classroom—to support their journey. Sending them away when they are on the cusp of licensure is a loss for our students, our school, and our community.

Giving these educators five years instead of three will keep dedicated, experienced, and deeply invested teachers in our classrooms where they belong.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of SB2125 SD1. I strongly urge the committee to vote YES on this bill and the proposed provisions.

Thank you for your time, your public service, and your thoughtful consideration of these points.

Sincerely,



Barbara Oura Tavares

Principal, Lihikai Elementary School

**SB-2125-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 9:08:48 PM

Testimony for EDN on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Younghee Overly	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for this opportunity to support SB2125 which permits the Department of Education to hire unlicensed individuals as teachers on an emergency basis for five, rather than three, years. This would give unlicensed teachers more time to get licensed and address the teacher shortage problem.

Younghee Overly, Indivisible Hawaii member

**SB-2125-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 9:29:45 PM

Testimony for EDN on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ted Meehan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB2125. Thank you.

Ted Meehan

**SB-2125-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 9:16:04 PM

Testimony for EDN on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jesse Hutchison	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**I am writing in strong support of SB2049. 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.**

**SB-2125-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 9:45:02 PM

Testimony for EDN on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tim Huycke	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB2125.

**SB-2125-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 10:08:31 PM

Testimony for EDN on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
James E Raymond	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you. I am a member of Indivisible Windward.

**SB-2125-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 10:26:13 PM

Testimony for EDN on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Robert Justice, M.D.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair; Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair; and Members of the Committee on Education, including Representative Kanani Souza of my district,

I apologize for my late testimony but hope that you will be able to consider it. I am a resident of Kapolei and a member of the Indivisible Hawaii Statewide Network. I am writing to provide testimony in strong support of SB2049. 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 towards 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.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Respectfully,

Robert L. Justice, M.D.

**SB-2125-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 11:12:48 PM

Testimony for EDN on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Cory Harden	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha legislators,

Please support this bill to help alleviate our teacher shortage!

mahalo,

Cory Harden, Hilo

Indivisible member

**SB-2125-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 12:29:04 AM

Testimony for EDN on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Brodie Lockard	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

**SB-2125-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 4:33:27 AM

Testimony for EDN on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kehaulani Coleman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you

**SB-2125-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 6:44:08 AM

Testimony for EDN on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jane Aquino	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**I am writing in strong support of SB2049 both personally and as a member of the Indivisible Hawaii State 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.**

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

**Jane Aquino, Indivisible**

**SB-2125-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 7:14:19 AM

Testimony for EDN on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jessica Kuzmier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am writing in support of SB2125 to help with our teacher shortage here in Hawai'i. Mahalo for your consideration.

**SB-2125-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 7:56:36 AM

Testimony for EDN on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Marie Elaine Lee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I've lived in the Islands since 1966 and am a retired teacher, after 48 years in the profession. We are desperate in Hawai'i for qualified, dedicated teachers. We need to establish and maintain quality teachers in our educational system.

I strongly support SB2125 and urge yu to do so as well.

**SB-2125-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 8:24:30 AM

Testimony for EDN on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
David Cuthbert	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of SB2049 both personally and as a member of East Hawaii Indivisible. This Bill amends Section 302A-804 of the HRS concerning the hiring of unlicensed teachers on an emergency basis. By extending the three year emergency hire limit to five years the bill harmonizes J-1 visa timelines with the emergency teacher timeline.

Foreign teachers are an important part of the response to our teacher shortage. Several hundred positions are presently filled with non-citizens who are here with J-1 visa status and by extending their emergency teaching period our keiki will be better off.

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

David Cuthbert, Pahoa

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Rep. Justin H. Woodson, Chair

Rep. Trish La Chica, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Thursday, March 19, 2026 at 2:00 pm

Conference Room 309 and Via Videoconference

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

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, Rep. Amato 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**, Relating to Teacher Licensing, 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 interfered with his ability to 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**, 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 SB2125, SD1.

Mahalo nui,

Christine L. Andrews, J.D.  
Wailuku, Maui

**SB-2125-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 1:11:57 PM

Testimony for EDN on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Denize Machit	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of SB2049 both personally and as a member of the Indivisible Hawaii State 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.

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

Denize Machit

**SB-2125-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 1:44:28 PM

Testimony for EDN on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Yuko Ida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**I am writing in strong support of SB2049 both personally and as a member of the Indivisible Hawaii State 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.**

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

**Yuko Ida**

**SB-2125-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 1:43:29 PM

Testimony for EDN on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
ginger edmunds	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please do not short change our Keiki they need qualified teachers. Public schools are so important to our state!

**SB-2125-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 2:23:12 PM

Testimony for EDN on 3/19/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
valerie Lasciak	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of this Bill because an overloaded classroom does not allow even the most talented teacher an opportunity to deliver the wisdom that they are totally capable of imparting!