



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

**Date:** 02/11/2026

**Time:** 01:30 PM

**Location:** CR 229 & Videoconference

**Committee:** EDU

**Department:** Education

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

**Title of Bill:** SB2754, RELATING TO CIVIC EDUCATION.

**Purpose of Bill:** Establishes a Civic Education Grant Program to provide support to public middle and intermediate schools in providing civic education to students through department approved programming. Establishes a Civic Education Trust Fund.

**Department's Position:**

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) supports SB 2754, which establishes a civic education grant program and a civic education trust fund to strengthen civic education in public middle and intermediate schools.

The Department supports strengthening civic education at all grade levels; however, an emphasis on the middle and intermediate school years is especially important. Early adolescence is a formative period for developing civic dispositions such as critical thinking, respectful dialogue, collaboration, and an understanding of democratic principles. Strategic investment during these grades prepares students to enter high school with the foundational knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for deeper civic engagement and informed participation in school and community life.

High-quality civic education depends on well-prepared educators and engaging instructional practices. Ongoing teacher professional development is essential to building educator capacity to facilitate inquiry-based discussion, guide students through complex civic issues, and connect classroom learning to real-world contexts. Equally important are project-based and experiential learning opportunities that allow students to apply civic knowledge and skills by researching issues, evaluating multiple perspectives, and taking informed action. These approaches increase student engagement and help translate civic concepts into authentic learning experiences.

The bill also aligns with the Department's Nā Hopena A'o (HĀ) framework by fostering a sense of belonging, responsibility, voice, and participation among students. Civic learning opportunities supported through this measure help students develop the dispositions of citizenship, mālama, and kuleana that are essential to Hawai'i's democratic society and local communities.

The creation of a civic education trust fund within the state treasury enables the Department to support these efforts through grants, gifts, donations, investment income, and other sources helping to sustain and expand civic learning opportunities statewide.

Furthermore, the Department respectfully requests an amendment to section 2, page 3, lines 10-11. The current language refers to the "office of curriculum and instructional support services." This should be amended to the "office of curriculum and instructional design" to accurately reflect the Department's organizational structure.

By strengthening civic education during the middle and intermediate grades, SB 2754 helps ensure that students are prepared for the expectations of high school civics coursework and are equipped to grow as informed, engaged citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 2754.



February 10, 2026

Position: **SUPPORT** of **SB2754**, Relating to Civic Education

**To:** Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair  
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair  
Members of the Senate Committee on Education

**From:** Llasmin Chaine, LSW, Executive Director, Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women

**Re:** Testimony in **SUPPORT** of **SB2754**, Relating to Civic Education

Hearing: Wednesday, February 11, 2026, 1:30 p.m.  
Conference Room 229, State Capitol

The Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women is dedicated to advancing gender equity and empowering women and girls throughout the state. **SB2754 is of significant interest because robust civic education is foundational to fostering informed, engaged citizens who can advocate for their rights and participate fully in democratic processes, an outcome directly aligned with the Commission’s mission and mandate.**

Establishing a Civic Education Grant Program and Trust Fund for public middle and intermediate schools would **help address disparities in access to quality civic learning opportunities, curriculum, and professional development.** Research consistently shows that early and comprehensive civic education increases students’ understanding of government, encourages lifelong civic participation, and supports the development of critical thinking skills. **For young women and girls, such programming can be particularly impactful in building confidence and leadership abilities, better understanding of local public service pathways, and awareness of how to effect change on issues that affect them.**

The bill’s approach, which empowers the Department of Education to administer grants, provides a structured yet flexible framework. This allows schools to tailor civic education initiatives to the needs of their students, teachers, and communities, while ensuring accountability and alignment with state educational goals. The creation of a dedicated trust fund further demonstrates a commitment to the sustainability of these efforts.

We appreciate the Legislature’s attention to civic education and respectfully **urge this Committee to pass SB2754.**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.

**Testimony to the Thirty-Third Legislature, 2026 Regular Session**

**Senate Committee on Education**  
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair  
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 11, 2026 at 1:30 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

Testimony By  
Keahe Davis  
Program Specialist  
Commission to Promote and Advance Civic Education (PACE Commission)

Associate Justice  
Lisa M. Ginoza  
*Chair*

Representative Amy A. Perruso  
*Vice-Chair*

Prof. Troy J.H. Andrade

Ku'uleianuhea Awo-Chun

Deanna D'Olier

David D. Day, Esq.

Rosanna Fukuda, MAEd

Debora Halbert, Ph.D.

Nathan G. Kam

Senator Dru M. Kanuha

Matt M. Mattice

Prof. Colin Moore

Ruth K. Oh, Esq.

Magistrate Judge  
Wes Reber Porter

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**Bill No. and Title:** Senate Bill No. 2754  
Relating to Civic Education

**Purpose:** Establishes a Civic Education Grant Program to provide support to public middle and intermediate schools in providing civic education to students through department approved programming. Establishes a Civic Education Trust Fund.

**PACE Commission's Position:**

The PACE Commission strongly supports the purposes of Senate Bill No. 2754 to:

1. Establish a civic education grant program within the Department of Education (DOE) to support civic education in public middle and intermediate schools through department-approved programming;
2. Create a civic education trust fund to provide sustainable, dedicated funding for civic education programming, curriculum implementation, teacher professional development, and student civic-learning opportunities; and
3. Establish an oversight structure requiring approval by a social studies educational specialist and annual reporting to ensure accountability and effectiveness.

This bill represents a critical investment in Hawai'i's civic infrastructure and addresses systemic challenges that have long limited the State's ability to provide equitable, high-quality civic education to all students.

### **The Critical Middle School Years**

The legislature correctly identifies that middle school and intermediate school represent a "pivotal period in which young people form lasting understandings of their role in public life and their connection to community, government, and 'āina." Research consistently shows that civic attitudes, knowledge, and participation habits developed during adolescence have lasting effects on lifelong civic engagement. By focusing resources on this critical developmental stage, Senate Bill No. 2754 targets the moment when students are most receptive to developing the civic skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for active participation in our democracy.

### **Evidence from the PACE Civics Survey**

The PACE Commission recently completed an extensive Civics Survey of public and private school educators throughout the state. A total of 883 educators, both teachers and administrators, responded to the survey. The findings provide compelling evidence for the urgent need addressed by Senate Bill No. 2754. The full Civics Survey Report is located on the General Resources page of the PACE website at <https://www.civicshawaii.org/resources/>.

### **Limited Professional Development**

Professional development is a key factor in strengthening civics education in Hawai'i's public schools. DOE teachers broadly agreed that the highest priority for professional learning is improving civics education pedagogy, especially best practices for engaging students. Three-quarters of administrators and 71% of teachers identified this as the most important area for professional development in civics[1]. Unfortunately, access to civics-specific training remains severely limited. Only 17% of DOE teachers reported receiving civics-specific training at least once a year[1].

This gap in professional development directly impacts the quality of civic instruction students receive. The civic education trust fund created by Senate Bill No. 2754 would provide the sustainable resources necessary to expand professional development opportunities for middle and intermediate school teachers, ensuring they have the pedagogical tools to engage students effectively in civic learning.

### **Inadequate Resources**

The survey results revealed that limited professional development opportunities and a shortage of civics-focused resources are major barriers to effective civics instruction[1]. Among DOE teachers, only 26% reported satisfaction with the quality of civics teaching and learning at their school. Additionally, 45% reported that available civics education resources were inadequate[1].

The resource gap is particularly acute at the elementary and middle grade levels. Only 13% of teachers in grades 3–5 and 18% of those in grades K–2 indicated they had sufficient materials[1]. When examining middle school grades specifically, only 26% of middle school teachers reported having access to adequate civics-focused materials [1]. This gap highlights a critical area for investment, because elementary and middle school teachers play a foundational role in fostering civic understanding during these formative years.

As one survey respondent noted, "Too much pressure to teach other content" was the top challenge identified by 56% of surveyed teachers[1]. This reflects the reality that without dedicated funding and resources, civics education is often pushed aside in favor of subjects with more established support structures.

### **Addressing Structural Funding Gaps**

As the Civics Survey results demonstrate, one of the major challenges to having a more robust and expansive civics education program in Hawai'i public schools is the lack of stable, dedicated resources. The trust fund created by Senate Bill No. 2754 would provide a mechanism for the DOE to receive funding from a variety of sources—including legislative appropriations, federal funding, and private grants and donations—all dedicated exclusively to the purpose of improving and supporting civics education in public middle and intermediate schools.

This focused funding mechanism is essential because, as the bill's findings correctly state, "civic education is often reliant on uneven school-level capacity, discretionary funds, or short-term grants that cannot sustain long-range program design." Without a reliable funding mechanism, disparities in civic opportunity widen, and the State's obligation to prepare young people for informed participation in our shared governance is weakened.

### **Supporting Civic Participation Through Grant-Based Programming**

The grant program structure established by Senate Bill No. 2754 is well designed to address the varied needs of Hawai'i's school communities. By allowing individual schools to apply for grants to support civic education programs, the bill recognizes that effective civics education must be responsive to local contexts and community needs while remaining aligned with statewide standards and priorities.

The survey revealed that teachers across grade levels are already employing effective strategies when resources are available. For instance, 40% of middle school teachers (grades 6-8) report discussing current events frequently or daily, and 39% engage students with real-world issues at least frequently[1]. Additionally, 27% of middle school teachers report that they frequently or almost daily engage students in exploring solutions to real-world problems[1]. These practices represent exactly the kind of engaged, inquiry-based civic learning that should be expanded and supported through the grant program.

The annual reporting requirements in Senate Bill No. 2754—requiring participating schools to report on implementation of civic education programming and curriculum, teacher development, and progress in meeting evaluation metrics—ensure accountability while allowing the DOE to identify and share best practices across schools.

### **Building on the Schools of Democracy Program**

One example of how dedicated civics education resources can transform student learning is the DOE's Hawai'i Schools of Democracy program. Mililani High School and Maui High School were the first to be designated as Schools of Democracy, followed by Kalani High School and Kailua High School. This year, the program has expanded to intermediate schools, with 'Ewa Makai Middle School and Waialua High and Intermediate being the first to receive the designation.

The designation as a School of Democracy means that, after a review process, these schools have demonstrated a rigorous commitment to civic learning, aligned with the core standards for social studies; opportunities for civic learning across the curriculum and through project learning; and a school culture that embraces the Aloha Spirit. This is just a glimpse and start of what is possible.

By establishing a dedicated funding stream through Senate Bill No. 2754, many more middle and intermediate schools across the state will have the resources to develop similar programs and achieve this level of civic education excellence. The grant program establishes the infrastructure to support schools in developing comprehensive civic education programs that serve as models for others.

### **Investing in Hawai'i's Civic Future**

The civic education trust fund and grant program established by Senate Bill No. 2754 represents more than a policy initiative. It is a fundamental investment in Hawai'i's civic future. By creating opportunities for every middle and intermediate school student in Hawai'i, regardless of geography, income, or school resources, to have meaningful access to high-quality civic learning, this bill affirms that civic education is a core public good essential to the health of our democracy.

The evidence from the PACE Civics Survey is clear: educators across Hawai'i recognize the importance of civics education and are ready to do more when provided with adequate resources, professional development, and institutional support. As one survey finding noted, "There are exciting possibilities for strengthening civics education in HIDOE schools. By making targeted investments in resources, expanding professional learning, and ensuring school-wide prioritization, Hawaii can better prepare students to become informed, engaged citizens who actively contribute to a democratic society"[1].

Senate Bill No. 2754 provides the structural foundation and sustainable funding mechanism to turn these possibilities into reality.

### **Conclusion**

The PACE Commission strongly supports Senate Bill No. 2754 and urges the Legislature to pass this bill, establishing both the civic education grant program and the civic education trust fund. By creating a permanent, purpose-restricted funding source for civic education in middle and intermediate schools, the Legislature will strengthen Hawai'i's students' ability to develop the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to participate fully in the life of our democracy.

The needs identified in the PACE Civics Survey—inadequate resources and limited professional development can be addressed through the framework established by this bill. Now is the time to make the strategic investment in civic education that our students and our democracy require.

**Brief background on the PACE Commission:** The PACE Commission was created pursuant to Rule 23 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of the State of Hawai'i, issued on January 7, 2021. The purpose of the PACE Commission is to promote and advance civic education for students and citizens throughout Hawai'i. The commission has fourteen members appointed according to Rule 23 by the following: Chief Justice of the Hawai'i Supreme Court, Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Superintendent of the Department of Education, Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the District of Hawai'i, President of the University of Hawai'i, Dean of the William S. Richardson

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Wednesday, February 11, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.  
Page 5

School of Law, Hawai'i State Bar Association, Hawai'i Association of Independent Schools, and two members selected by the other appointed members.

Thank you for hearing this bill and for the opportunity to provide testimony.

**References**

[1] PACE Commission to Promote and Advance Civic Education. (2025). *From Classroom to Community: Advancing Civics Education in Hawaii* [Civics Survey Report]. <https://www.civicshawaii.org/resources/>

**SB-2754**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 1:20:54 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/11/2026 1:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
An Vo	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is An and I'm a public health student on O'ahu. I support SB2754.

I grew up in Hawai'i public schools and have not thought about climate change until high school, and I only became serious about it when, in college, I learned about the anthropocene, or a future that is destroyed by humans.

Civic engagement is not a part of my college classes, and I took a semester-long class about Hawaiian history and civic participation in high school but I do not remember what I learned because that class was for a grade. I also wrote for my high school newspaper, and I'm taking a class in college to refresh my skills and I remember the importance of writing the truth and being informed on current events.

Now that I am in college, I take extra opportunities outside of class to engage with various organizations to ban tobacco, advocate for local food systems, and advocate for more student perspectives within Hawai'i legislature. Punahou School on O'ahu has a Davis Democracy program in which kids, as early as kindergarten, are civically engaged and learn about current events. I wish more opportunities like that, including student journalism, were incorporated in Hawai'i schools.

Please support SB2754 so that our youth, or our future leaders, can have opportunities to be informed citizens who contribute to the communities beyond their campuses.

Mahalo,  
An  
Honolulu



The Senate Committee on Education

February 11, 2026

Room 229

1:30 PM

**RE: SB 2754, Relating to Civic Education**

Attention: Chair Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Michelle N. Kidani, Members of the Committee

The University of Hawaii Professional Assembly (UHPA), the exclusive bargaining representative for all University of Hawai'i faculty members across Hawai'i's statewide 10-campus system, **supports SB 2754.**

We agree with the legislature's finding that a thriving democracy depends on an engaged, informed, and empowered citizenry. As educators in higher education, we see firsthand that the habits of democratic participation—including critical thinking, media literacy, and collaborative problem-solving—must be intentionally cultivated long before students reach the university level.

We strongly support the bill's intent to provide dedicated, stable resources to strengthen civic education during the pivotal middle and intermediate school years. By establishing a permanent funding source specifically for this age group, the State can ensure that young people—who are at a stage where they form lasting understandings of their role in public life and their connection to community and government—have access to the experiential learning and high-quality curriculum necessary to help bridge the gap in civic opportunity and better prepare them for higher education and active citizenship.

**For these reasons UHPA supports the passage of SB 2754.**

Respectfully submitted,

Christian L. Fern  
Executive Director  
University of Hawaii Professional Assembly

**University of Hawaii  
Professional Assembly**



To: Hawaii State Senate Committee on Education

RE: Testimony in STRONG SUPPORT of SB2754 Relating to Civic Education

Dear Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Committee,

The members of AAUW of Hawai'i thank you for hearing this measure.

We strongly support HB1875 which would establish a civic education grant program to provide the support public middle and intermediate schools need in offering civic education to students.

Civic education prepares students with the knowledge, skills, and critical thinking needed for them to actively participate in civic life including turning out to vote and encourages community engagement. AAUW believes that our democracy works when everyone fully participates.

Please pass this measure to increase civic, voter, and community engagement in Hawai'i.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Younghee Overly  
AAUW of Hawai'i Public Policy Committee

*The American Association of University Women (AAUW) of Hawai'i is an all-volunteer, statewide chapter of a national organization with close to 4000 members and supporters across all four counties - Hawai'i, Honolulu, Kaua'i, and Maui. AAUW has state chapters in all 50 states and our mission is to advance gender equity through education and advocacy. Economic security for women is our goal.*



## **SENATE BILL 2754, RELATING TO CIVIC EDUCATION**

FEBRUARY 11, 2026 · EDU HEARING

**POSITION:** Support.

**RATIONALE:** The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** SB 2754, relating to civic education, which establishes a Civic Education Grant Program to provide support to public middle and intermediate schools in providing civic education to students through department approved programming, and establishes a Civic Education Trust Fund.

*“We must arm today’s young people with innovative civic education that is relevant to them. Bringing high-quality civics to every school in every state of our union is the only way that the next generations will become effective citizens and leaders.” –Sandra Day O’Connor, iCivics Founder and Former U.S. Supreme Court Justice*

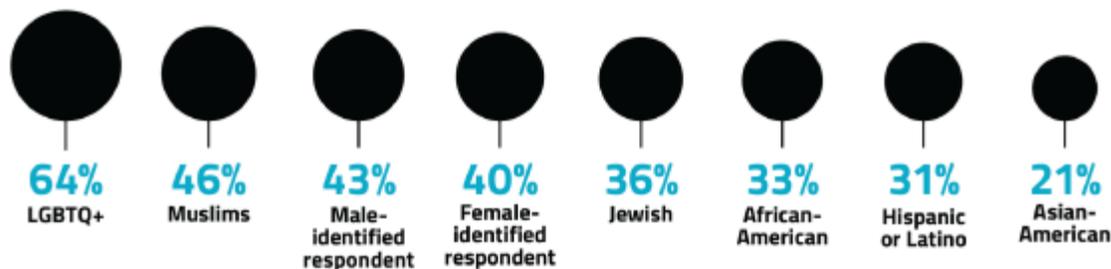
Civic education is essential to the preservation of our democracy. Today, our society is endangered by xenophobic authoritarians who seek to suppress the rights and perspectives of marginalized people. We are witnessing a resurgence of hate crimes in the U.S., which, according to the U.S. Department of Justice, have surged by nearly 80 percent since 2015. Data from the FBI showed a 168 percent increase in anti-Asian hate crime incidents from 2020 to 2021. These are shocking statistics that reveal the structural violence infecting our national community, which we must take seriously.

**Kris Coffield, Chairperson • Camron Hurt, Vice Chairperson •  
Amy Perruso and Justin Hughey, SCC Members**

Increasingly, social media websites have become platforms for the perpetuation of political resentment and the reproduction of social inequality. Major social media platforms, like those owned by Meta, are currently rolling back fact-checking and misinformation detection efforts in an attempt to appease the despotic prejudices of the Trump administration. According to a 2018 report published by the data clearinghouse Statista, 64 percent of teenagers in the United States have encountered hate speech on social media. At the same time, incidents of political violence have been escalating. Cyberspace is no longer an undiscovered frontier. Today, our virtual and actual lives have become inextricably comingled. If we are not careful, though, technological advancement can generate the digital reproduction of violent extremism.

## Online Hate and Harassment

### Demographics of Harassment (Total harassment experienced by group)



Source: Anti-Defamation League, *Online Hate and Harassment: The American Experience 2021*

We have a responsibility to empower our keiki with the skills necessary to overcome misinformation and online hate speech, and to become fully engaged members of our civic community. As the nonpartisan organization iCivics, founded by former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, states, "Something special happens when we have confidence in our democracy. We engage. We raise a hand. We lift our voices. We listen to each other. We come together to share ideas and solve common challenges."

Increasing lack of faith in democracy among younger generations, dearth of civic knowledge, susceptibility to false information, and waning public trust contribute to our current levels of polarization, which is further exacerbated by the lack of meaningful, culturally relevant civic education in our schools. Since the earliest days of our constitutional democracy, public schools have played an essential mission in delivering civic learning. Research conducted by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) at Tufts University found that students who receive quality civic education are:

- **More likely to vote** and discuss politics at home;
- **More likely to complete college** and develop employable skills;
- **Four times more likely to volunteer** and work on community issues; and
- **More confident in their ability to speak publicly** and communicate with their elected representatives.

To preserve the foundations of our democracy for generations to come, we should invest in civic education programming in our public school system.

**Contact: [educationcaucusdph@gmail.com](mailto:educationcaucusdph@gmail.com) · 808-679-7454**

**SB-2754**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 12:36:48 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/11/2026 1:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Sonia Blackiston	Testifying for Hawaii Youth Services NetworkAloha	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Mercado Kim and Vice-Chair Kidani,

Hawaii Youth Services Network supports this effort to provide civic education to middle and intermediate schools through appropriate department of education approved programming via a Civic Education Grant Program.

Respectfully,

Sonia Blackiston

Executive Director

Hawaii Youth Services Network

**SB-2754**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 2:18:40 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/11/2026 1:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Casey Park	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of SB2754. Providing keiki with civic education will empower them with agency over their own communities and futures. Supporting this effort is an investment in a connected, civically-engaged community.

**SB-2754**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 8:55:25 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/11/2026 1:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lanaly Cabalo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support Civic Education in our schools. It's important to build an understanding of how government works and how it impacts every day life. Teachers need support in the classroom to do so. This includes training and materials. I believe this grant program would do that.

**SB-2754**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 10:17:20 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/11/2026 1:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
cheryl burghardt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members

I SUPPORT SB 2754! As an elementary educator, I understand the value of civics education. It's more than a class, though, it's every day and a part of classrooms from preschool until graduation. The basics of Civics are there. THIS does not mean that we should not actively teach and provide meaningful experiences and learning in Civics. We definitely should which this bill SB 2754 will help. Civics should not be taught in isolation especially in today's world. Our community and schools should understand its' definition and how students experience and express it. People decry that the students have no civics but when high school students understand and express those understandings, well there is a fine balance.

It is my hope with this bill that the DOE will be prepared to teach and help children learn Civics in the world of 2026 , with that hope I support this bill.

Cheryl Burghardt

Nuuanu Oahu

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Christian, and I am a high school student from O‘ahu, testifying in support of SB2754, establishing a Civic Education Grant Program to provide support to public middle and intermediate schools in providing civic education to students through department-approved programming.

As a student, I’ve been very fortunate to have had multiple opportunities to be civically engaged and work with my communities, and this has become a huge part of my life. I’ve had the opportunity to work with Kids Voting Hawaii, a nonpartisan organization that works to promote voter participation and education amongst youth. My personal goal is to empower others, showing they can be changemakers in society, and I believe that this is best achieved through strong civic education. At school, one of my favorite classes has been Dialogues Across Differences, a class focused on fostering healthy and constructive dialogue about controversial topics. Some things we talked about were climate change, social media, autonomy, and more. This was a really eye-opening experience for me, as I heard a diverse range of perspectives that in turn shaped my own learning. I think it’s really important to recognize that it’s okay to disagree with people, as long as done in a respectful and constructive manner.

For these reasons, I believe this bill, SB2754, should be passed. Thank you for your consideration.

Mahalo,  
Christian K.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christian K." The signature is stylized with a large, looping "C" and a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

**SB-2754**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 10:37:56 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/11/2026 1:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Karen Shimizu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Civic education is vital to restoring and maintaining a properly functioning community and society. This bill is long overdue.

February 10, 2026

Aloha all,

My name is Shaunessy Denton, and I am a public high school social studies teacher in Hawai'i. I am writing in support of S.B. 2754 and its commitment to funding and supporting civic education in our public schools.

I appreciate that this bill clearly affirms civic education as a core value of the State of Hawai'i. Teaching students how to participate thoughtfully and meaningfully in a democracy is not an "extra" or enrichment activity; it is a vital part of public education. By establishing dedicated funding and recognizing the importance of civic learning, this bill sends an important message that civic education matters and deserves sustained support.

I also support the bill's emphasis on professional development and increased resources for civic education. High-quality civic learning requires skilled facilitation, culturally responsive curriculum, and opportunities for students to engage with real-world issues. Dedicated funding has the potential to strengthen this work and expand access for students across schools.

At the same time, I respectfully ask the Legislature to carefully consider how the reporting and administrative requirements of this program will affect teachers. I do not expect a system with no accountability for public funds, and I understand the importance of transparency. However, teachers are routinely asked to take on additional responsibilities without corresponding time, compensation, or removal of existing demands. As written, the requirements associated with applying for and reporting on this funding may unintentionally discourage classroom teachers from participating.

In reality, I, and many teachers like me, would likely continue doing this civic education work on our own time, without additional pay or protected planning time, rather than engage with a process that adds to an already overwhelming workload. Without structural support, this well-intentioned program risks being inaccessible to the very educators it is meant to empower.

I urge you to also consider supporting civic education in additional ways. This includes smaller class sizes, higher wages for teachers, and protected planning time during the workday. Sustained civic learning could also be a full year of civics education, rather than a semester long course. In addition, the State can play a critical role by developing and maintaining partnerships with community and civic organizations that already work effectively with schools, so teachers are not required to independently seek out and manage these relationships. Finally, long-term success depends on state-supported professional development and meaningful support for teachers who pursue additional education to strengthen their civic content knowledge and instructional practice. These changes could be investments that benefit both students and teachers across the system.

S.B. 2754 is an important and meaningful first step. With thoughtful attention to teacher workload and working conditions, it has the potential to make a real and lasting impact on civic education in Hawai'i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit this testimony and for your commitment to our students and our democracy.

Respectfully,  
Shaunessy Denton

**SB-2754**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 12:14:50 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/11/2026 1:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mike Landes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha chair and members of the committee,

As a high school civics teacher, parent of two public school students, and concerned citizen, I write today to encourage you to support SB2754. Recent events reveal the dramatic need for increased civic education across the nation. Here at home, I frequently notice a lack of basic political, governmental, and historical knowlegde from people of every age range. If we want a functioning society, we need to do something about this. Ours is a government by the people, but if the people are misinformed or uninformed, we are doomed to sprial further out of control. The trend in recent years where schools focus solely on standardized test performance in reading/writing/math, combined with the politicized push in some states to reduce civic education, has contributed to this situation. Establishing funds to increase civic education is one step in the right direction. Please support this bill and others that will help to create a more robust and well-rounded public education system with proper funding.

Mahalo for your time,

Mike Landes

Kihei