



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

March 2, 2026

WRITTEN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

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

DATE: March 2, 2026

TIME 10:31 am

LOCATION: Conference Room 211 and Video Conference

TITLE OF BILL: SB 2875 J-1 Visa Program; Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board; Visiting International Educator Permit

POSITION: Opposes SB 2875

Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means:

The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) respectfully opposes SB2875, relating to education, which would require the HTSB to develop an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit aligned with the duration of the educator's J-1 visa program.

In the preamble of this bill, it states that the purpose is to expose Filipino children to Filipino educators, which, in turn, would inspire them to consider careers in education. This statement is conclusory and pigeonholes all ethnically Filipino children together, regardless of whether they have been born and raised in Hawai'i or in the Philippines.

The bill states that since the implementation of the J-1 Visa program, it has been a resounding success. The HTSB responds by questioning what is meant by the term "resounding success" as it applies to the increase in the number of internationally certified teachers currently employed in public schools statewide, as well as those set to arrive in 2026-2027. What are the measurable gains and improvements in the students' improved academic performance, and how is this attributed to the J-1 visa program instructors directly? This bill aims to increase students' productivity merely by increasing the number of teachers, qualified or not, in classrooms, rather than focusing on improving their intellectual development.

This bill incorrectly states that the State's existing rules limit the full potential of prospective international teachers participating in the J-1 visa program. The HTSB shall issue licenses, provided that the applicant meets the criteria set forth by law. Under the current policy, International applicants have applied for licenses and permits, and those who have met the requirements for licensure 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 for internationally certified teachers.

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 in their home countries. In fact, some individuals have started taking at least one Praxis test before they move here. The Praxis tests they 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 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.

At the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) a few years back, there was a labor session and a resolution specifically addressing protections for those with J-1 visas. **They decided to add language to the NCSL resolution to protect J1 teachers from 3rd party companies offering J1 Visa holders these high-interest loans (up to 50% compounded interest loans).** These companies even charged J1 Visa holders a licensing fee even when states, such as ours, **have no licensing fee.** Other states have had major problems with this type of activity, before we even heard about it in Hawai'i, so these states have let us know. NCSL passed this resolution with those protections for J1 teachers. This is how our J1 visa holders should be protected. They need to be protected from these loan sharks.

Here are links to documents that explain more that were shared at NCSL. AFL-CIO [Use and Abuse of the J-1 Exchange Visitor Teacher Program — Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO](#) Note: Make sure you check out the articles they include citations as well at the bottom of this report. Here is also a report from the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) [Importing Educators: Causes and Consequences of International Teacher Recruitment](#) who is more aware of this problem as it hit them first. [Start on page 17 to see the fraud and the recruiting tactics that are being used.]

There is no licensing fee for all who apply for a license or permit in the State of Hawai'i, since we are now funded by the legislature for our operations. HTSB used to rely on licensing fees, but now we have ZERO licensing fees, since being funded by the legislature. While these foreign certified teachers have to pay for testing fees, they do not have to pay any licensing or permit fees, as we do not charge any.

Other states, like Alaska, do charge a licensing fee (About \$200), along with Nevada, and North Carolina.

It is HTSB's understanding that J-1 teachers are being paid as provisional license holders, despite only holding an Emergency Hire Permit. They may also be paid at a higher rate because of their years of teaching experience, but you would have to find out from their employer, HIDOE, for more information.

Any other profession requires international license holders to meet the licensure requirements of the profession in that state. This is true of professions such as physicians, pilots, attorneys, engineers, nurses, and mental health counselors, and the list goes on. They must demonstrate proficiency in the language and pass tests that verify their skills and knowledge meet local standards.

Teaching is a profession that should be held to the same standards. Our students deserve quality teachers.

This bill undermines HTSB's authority to determine licensing and certification standards for all teachers in the State of Hawai'i, thereby ensuring that children in public schools are provided with qualified teachers. HTSB is fully capable of licensing and issuing permits to teachers from in-state, out-of-state, and other countries, in accordance with the current licensing and permit laws outlined in Hawaii Revised Statutes §302A and Hawaii Administrative Rules Chapter 54.

Therefore, we humbly ask this committee to **oppose** this bill.



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

Date: 03/02/2026

Time: 10:31 AM

Location: CR 211 & Videoconference

Committee: WAM

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB2875, RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Requires the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit aligned to the duration of the educator's J-1 visa program. Repeals 6/30/2031.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education supports SB 2875, which would align Hawaii's emergency hire permit for international teachers with the full duration of the federal J-1 teacher exchange program. Federal law allows J-1 teachers to serve for up to five years, yet Hawaii's current three-year permit forces effective, authorized teachers out of classrooms early. Aligning state policy with the full J-1 term ensures students benefit from the complete period of service these educators are approved to provide.

Students benefit from stability when teachers can remain in classrooms without disruption, particularly in hard-to-staff schools. J-1 teachers are fully trained and licensed professionals in their home countries and are placed in high-need areas such as special education, secondary math and science, English language development, and rural schools. For many campuses, they serve as core instructional staff.

The Hawaii Administrative Rules §8-54-9. 6 "Limited duty special permit" allows for permits to extend past three years in both Career and Technical Education and Hawaiian Language Immersion fields. Providing a pathway for visiting international teachers recognizes the accomplishments of the teacher in their respective country, while recognizing the five-year federal guidelines of the J-1 system.

Allowing teachers to serve the full authorized term improves retention, strengthens workforce stability, and ensures Hawaii's students receive the greatest benefit from these experienced educators.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 2875.



**STATE HEALTH PLANNING
AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH - KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO

JOSH GREEN, MD
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII

KENNETH S. FINK, MD, MGA, MPH
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH
KA LUNA HO'ŌKELE

JOHN C. (JACK) LEWIN, MD
ADMINISTRATOR

February 26, 2026

TO: SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Honorable Members

FROM: John C. (Jack) Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA, and Sr. Advisor to
Governor Josh Green, MD on Healthcare Innovation

RE: SB 2875 -- RELATING TO EDUCATION

HEARING: Wednesday, March 2, 2026 @ 10:31 am; Conference Room 211

POSITION: SUPPORT with COMMENTS

Testimony:

SHPDA strongly supports SB 2875 with comments.

This bill is intended to strengthen Hawai'i's ability to use the BridgeUSA J-1 visa teacher program to address ongoing teacher shortages while also improving educator diversity and cultural exchange in our public schools. The bill does this by requiring the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board to create an alternative "visiting international educator permit" that is aligned to the duration of a teacher's J-1 visa program, recognizing that current licensing requirements can be costly and difficult to complete within the typical three-year visa period. By better aligning the permit with the visa timeframe, the measure aims to improve teacher retention, maintain instructional continuity for students, and allow Hawai'i to benefit from the full period of service these qualified educators are eligible to provide

This bill would help classrooms and students by improving stability and continuity in hard-to-staff schools by reducing turnover and disruptions when visiting international teachers are otherwise forced out before they can complete Hawai'i's full licensure process. It also supports better student outcomes by strengthening educator diversity and representation, which the bill notes can help close achievement gaps and improve attendance and behavioral outcomes, while giving students more relatable role models in the classroom. Finally, by reducing costly and time-intensive testing barriers (often exceeding \$1,000) for already-qualified international educators, the measure promotes a more equitable pathway that can keep effective teachers in Hawai'i's public schools longer and maximize the benefit of their service.

SB 2875: testimony of SHPDA (2026), continued.

In closing, this bill is a practical, time-limited step that gives the State a clearer framework to support qualified visiting international educators and the schools that rely on them. By setting up a defined permit option with a sunset date, the bill allows Hawai'i to test and refine this approach while keeping accountability in place.

Thank you for hearing SB 2875.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

■ -- Jack Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB2875 - RELATING TO EDUCATION

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Sen. Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Sen. Sharon Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 2, 2026 | Letter Date: March 1, 2026

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

The Legal Clinic supports SB2875, which directs the Hawai`i Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for visiting international educators to obtain permits aligned with the duration of their J-1 visas.

As a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing immigrant justice across Hawai`i through immigration legal services, community education, and policy advocacy, TLC welcomes and commends the fair and transparent pathway this bill will create for qualified noncitizen professionals to access stability and contribute fully to Hawai`i's schools and communities during their authorized stay.

SB2875 recognizes the important role international educators play in strengthening Hawai`i's educational system. J-1 educators are experienced, trained professionals who are often placed in hard-to-fill positions and schools facing persistent staffing shortages. Currently, Hawai`i's three-year emergency hire permit often forces effective J-1 teachers to leave prematurely, disrupting student learning, especially in rural and neighbor island schools.

SB2875 addresses this challenge by allowing permits to remain valid for the duration of an educator's J-1 exchange program participation - reducing unnecessary procedural barriers and legal uncertainty, while promoting instructional continuity. International teachers gain greater clarity and security, and students benefit from the full term of service these teachers are authorized to provide.

Mahalo for your leadership in enhancing workforce stability for our schools, strengthening educational continuity for our students, and promoting fair treatment and peace of mind for our visiting international educators.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of The Legal Clinic
and TLC Board President Amefil Agbayani,

Christina Sablan
Community & Policy Advocate



www.hicir.org | Instagram @hicir
hicoalitionforimmigrantrights@gmail.com

Testimony of Liza Ryan-Gill In SUPPORT of SB2875

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 2, 2026

Dear Chair Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Sharon Y. Moriwaki, and members of the Committee on Ways and Means,

My name is Liza Ryan-Gill, and I submit this testimony on behalf of the Hawai‘i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR) in **strong support of SB2875**, which requires the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit aligned to the duration of the educator’s J-1 visa program, and repeals on 6/30/2031.

HCIR is a coalition of 30+ immigrant-serving and immigrant-led organizations across the pae ‘āina working to advance policies that protect immigrant and migrant communities and strengthen Hawai‘i as a place where all families can thrive. Many of our member organizations work directly with multilingual students and families and see firsthand how educator stability and culturally responsive learning environments support student success.

SB2875 is important because it aligns Hawai‘i’s educator permitting with the actual timelines of J-1 exchange teacher programs, reducing administrative mismatch and improving staffing stability for schools. When permit timelines do not match J-1 program duration, it creates avoidable uncertainty for educators and administrators and can disrupt continuity for students—particularly in classrooms where visiting international educators contribute critical cultural competency and, often, multilingual skills.

By directing the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative permit pathway aligned to the J-1 visa program duration, SB2875:

- Aligns permit duration with the J-1 program, improving continuity for students and schools.
- Reduces unnecessary administrative barriers and uncertainty for visiting educators and administrators.
- Supports teacher recruitment and retention by creating a predictable, workable permit pathway consistent with the bill’s purpose.
- Strengthens culturally responsive education and can expand language capacity in classrooms.
- Includes a time-limited policy design through the 6/30/2031 repeal date, encouraging evaluation and future refinement.



www.hicir.org | Instagram @hicir
hicoalitionforimmigrantrights@gmail.com

We also note that SB2875 is listed as “Same As” HB1840, reflecting coordinated efforts to address this issue across both chambers.

For these reasons, HCIR respectfully requests that the Committee PASS SB2875.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

With gratitude,

Liza Ryan-Gill

Executive Director, Hawai‘i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR)

lryangill@hicir.org

SB-2875

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 5:37:15 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/2/2026 10:31:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry OPPOSE

WHY, TO PREVENT OUR CHILDREN FROM BEING TRAUMATIZED BY ICE RAIDS -
WHITE HOUSE UNREGULATED

2875 SB RELATING TO EDUCATION.

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Monday, March 2, 2026 at 10:31 am
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2875 - RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, Senator Hashimoto for my district, Senator DeCoite for Upcountry Maui, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Christine Andrews and I am a long-term resident of Wailuku, Maui. I am also an attorney licensed in the state of Hawaii for over 25 years and a founding coalition member of El Pueblo en Acción (EPA) Maui – The People in Action Maui. I am writing today in **strong support of SB 2875, Relating to Education**, which requires the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit aligned to the duration of the educator's J-1 visa program.

Early in my career I worked on gender equity in STEM as a workforce development issue for many years. I focused on issues in recruitment and retention and wrote over ten peer-reviewed papers on best practices in the field. One of the key workforce development areas I identified in my work with K-12 teachers and administrators 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.

In my work I identified risks to our community presented by unnecessary barriers to recruiting and retaining teachers for our schools on Maui. One such barrier is lack of consistency between federal and state standards for visiting international educator permits for educators on the J-1 visa program. Senate Bill 2875 would help remedy this situation and improve the pathway for longer retention of teachers on the J-1 visa program by adding a new Section 302A-802 to the HRS requiring the Teacher Standards Board to adopt policies which would make it easier for foreign teachers to extend their visa status from three to five years. The federal J-1 program standards provide for a three year visa term that can be extended to five years if certain criteria are met. Senate Bill 2875 would require the Teacher Standards Board to fully implement the federal program and facilitate visa extensions from three to five years.

Senate Bill 2875 seeks to adopt and facilitate the federal standard that allows for J-1 visa extensions from three to five years, helping foreign teachers at our schools stay longer, reducing teacher turnover and building more integrated school communities with more experienced teachers. For this reason, **I respectfully request that you vote in support of SB 2875.**

Mahalo for supporting our schools and our valued J-1 visa teachers,

Christine Andrews, JD
Wailuku, Maui



COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

HEARING:
Monday, March 2, 2026 at 10:31 am
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2875 - RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, Maui Senators Hashimoto and DeCoite, 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 2875**, Relating to Education, which requires the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit aligned to the duration of the educator's J-1 visa program.

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. Senate Bill 2875 would add a new Section 302A-802 to the HRS requiring the Teacher Standards Board to adopt policies which would make it easier for foreign teachers to extend their visa status from three to five 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 2875 would require the Teacher Standards Board to fully implement the federal program and facilitate visa extensions from three to five years.

Senate Bill 2875 seeks to adopt and facilitate the federal standard that allows for J-1 visa extensions from three to five years, helping foreign teachers at our schools stay longer, reducing turnover and building more integrated school communities. For this reason, Roots Reborn respectfully requests that you vote **in support of SB 2875**.

Sinceramente,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Veronica Mendoza', written over a horizontal line.

Veronica Mendoza
Maui Roots Reborn, *Founding Executive Director*
El Pueblo en Accion Maui, *Founding Coalition Member*

SB-2875

Submitted on: 2/27/2026 11:23:22 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/2/2026 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cory Harden	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha legislators,

Please support this bill to increase the number of teachers, and create an less stressful experience for visiting teachers.

mahalo,

Cory Harden

SB-2875

Submitted on: 2/28/2026 8:22:08 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/2/2026 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Judith Mura	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

STRONGLY SUPPORT SB2875

Testimony In SUPPORT of SB2875

Committee on Ways and Means

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 2, 2026

Dear Chair Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Sharon Y. Moriwaki, and members of the Committee on Ways and Means,

My name is Jeremiah Brown, and I submit this testimony in **support of SB2875**, which requires the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit aligned to the duration of the educator's J-1 visa program.

I am a teacher at a school with hundreds of students from the Philippines and thousands of students of Filipino ancestry. I fully support the J-1 teachers from the Philippines who have been working in our schools for the past few years. They are dedicated, hard-working educators who contribute meaningfully to our school communities. They help ensure that all students have qualified, experienced teachers, not long-term substitutes.

SB2875 is important because schools need stable, predictable staffing pathways—and permit timelines should align with the real duration of J-1 exchange educator programs. When permitting and program timelines do not align, it creates uncertainty for educators and administrators and can disrupt continuity for students.

By directing the Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative permit pathway aligned to J-1 program duration, this bill supports responsible staffing, reduces unnecessary administrative barriers, and helps ensure Hawai'i classrooms can benefit from qualified visiting international educators who contribute valuable skills and cultural competency.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee **PASS SB2875**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,
Jeremiah Brown
Waialua, Oahu

SB-2875

Submitted on: 2/28/2026 4:49:56 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/2/2026 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Lum	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Jen Lum, and I am writing to support SB2875. This bill asks the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board to create a new permit process for visiting international educators that matches the length of their J-1 visa programs.

As a public school teacher in Hawai‘i, I know we have a teacher shortage. SB2875 is important because schools need stable staffing. Permit timelines should match the actual duration of J-1 programs. When these timelines don’t align, it creates uncertainty for educators and administrators, which can disrupt students’ learning.

By having the Teacher Standards Board create a new permit process that fits J-1 programs, this bill helps schools hire qualified international educators. These educators bring valuable skills and cultural knowledge to our classrooms.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the Committee to pass SB2875.

Mahalo.

Jen Lum, ‘Ewa Beach

SB-2875

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 7:36:06 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/2/2026 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
amy agbayani	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

i strongly support sb2875 requiring the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for a Visiting International Education Permit aligned with the duration of an educators J-1 visa. The bill will help Hawai'i address teacher shortages by providing competent teachers particularly where there are shortages in various geographic areas and disciplines.. In addition, J-1 visa holders with cultural and linguistic skills can work with students from these backgrounds. 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. 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. Currently there are 32,044 (10%) students who are enrolled in programs to learn English.

I strongly support this bill and respectfully request your support,

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

We support this bill as it will benefit our schools by hav

SB-2875

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 10:02:01 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/2/2026 10:02:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ana Laura Flores-Garcia	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the committee,

My name is Ana Flores, and I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of SB2875, which requires the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit aligned to the duration of the educator’s J-1 visa program.

I am a multilingual mother and member of our Hawai‘i community. I am testifying as an individual. As a parent raising children here, I understand firsthand the importance of educational consistency and the deeply positive impact that caring, culturally competent educators have on our keiki. Our schools deserve staffing pathways that support classroom stability and promote educational excellence for all students. SB2875 is critical for this purpose by aligning teacher permitting requirements with the federal J-1 exchange teacher program. When permit timelines are not aligned with J-1 visa durations, it creates avoidable uncertainty for school administrators and visiting international educators alike. This can lead to disruptions in staffing and classroom continuity for our students—especially in schools serving multilingual and culturally diverse communities.

By directing the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board to create an alternative permit pathway that aligns with the J-1 program duration, this bill provides a practical, common-sense solution.

As a parent, I especially appreciate how visiting international educators contribute to the cultural competency and linguistic diversity that reflect our state’s rich heritage. Ensuring pathways that support these educators helps our children see the world in broader, more inclusive ways, and it fosters a learning environment that values diversity and global understanding.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to **PASS SB2875**.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to present this testimony.

Ana Flores

anaflores.mpa@gmail.com