



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:** SB2877, RELATING TO EDUCATION.

**Purpose of Bill:** Requires the Department of Education to establish a one-year Student-Authored Book Publication Pilot Program for fifth graders at Kalihi public elementary schools. Requires a report to the legislature. Appropriates funds.

**Department's Position:**

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) agrees with the Legislature on the value of student-authored publications documenting the rich history and local community of Kalihi as outlined in SB2877.

Respectfully, the Department cannot support the bill in its current form at this time, given the extensive literacy investments underway in Kalihi through the Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) Grant, which require significant time and effort from the Kalihi schools. Additionally, given the fiscal constraints facing the state, the Department feels that this might be better considered at a future time. However, the Department appreciates the legislature's consideration of the pilot and looks forward to continued collaboration with the Legislature on this topic. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding SB 2877.

**SB-2877**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 10:09:46 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 2877, the pilot program at Kalihi Elementary for student-authored books. As a retired elementary educator, I know the value of these creations and process is invaluable and an asset to the community as well.

My hope is that this is a way of showing educators who have been helping students create books, writings and publishing with their own monies or on school duplicating machines that there is a pilot program and that the results and direction of the pilot will be shared throughout the DOE.

I am personally excited for Kalihi Elem.'s students and look forward to seeing their products. This State bill 2877 puts some teeth and \$\$ behind a great idea which the DOE should be encouraging at all times. imho

Cheryl Burghardt

Nuuanu Oahu

**SB-2877**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 12:51:46 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>
Dale Nakamoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senator Kim Chair, Senator Kidani, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I submit this testimony in strong support of requiring the Hawai‘i State Department of Education to establish a one-year Student-Authored Book Publication Pilot Program for fifth-grade students at Kalihi public elementary schools.

Under this pilot program, students would research, write, and illustrate original books focused on Hawaiian culture, history, or their local community. Students would participate in the full writing process—from research and drafting to revision, illustration, and final publication—resulting in a completed, published work.

This program would strengthen literacy by engaging students in authentic reading, writing, and research tasks. Authoring a book requires students to analyze information, organize ideas, develop narratives, and communicate clearly to a real audience. These skills are essential to academic success and cannot be fully developed through isolated or short-term writing assignments.

The pilot would also increase student engagement and confidence. Publishing student work fosters pride and ownership of learning. For students in Kalihi, culturally relevant, place-based learning affirms identity, elevates local voices, and deepens connections to community. Writing about Hawaiian culture and local history supports meaningful learning while helping preserve knowledge through student perspectives.

Additionally, the program would strengthen communication skills through collaboration, presentations, and reflection. Students learn to express ideas, respond to feedback, and refine their work—skills that extend beyond the classroom.

A one-year pilot allows the Department of Education to evaluate implementation, measure outcomes, and identify best practices before potential expansion. This initiative supports literacy, student voice, and culturally responsive education.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your support for this pilot program.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dale Nakamoto

**SB-2877**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 12:58:41 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>
Terry Chang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of SB 2877.

I have experience with children who struggle with learning in “traditional” ways, so imagine implementing a program like this in a classroom where students get to write and publish their own books. Kids could choose topics they care about—like Hawaiian culture, local history, or their own neighborhood—and see a project through from start to finish, from research and writing to illustrating and holding a real, published book.

For students who don’t thrive with worksheets and lectures, this kind of hands-on, meaningful project makes learning real. It builds confidence, pride, and a connection to their community. They also practice teamwork, communication, and responding to feedback—skills that last far beyond the classroom.

Even just one year of this could make a huge difference for students who need a different way to learn.

Thank you for your time.

**SB-2877**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 1:00:44 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>
Piikea Kalakau-Baarde, EdD	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senator Kim, Chair, Senator Kidani, Vice Chair, and Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Pi'ikea Kalakau-Baarde, and I work at Teach for America Hawai'i. I'm a former public school teacher and now support TFA Hawai'i's local initiatives, including our corps member programming, early literacy, alumni leadership development, external affairs, and more.

I'm reaching out in support of SB2877, which requires the Department of Education to establish a one-year student-authored book publication pilot program for fifth graders at Kalihi public elementary schools.

A significant portion of my current role involves advancing a 10-year goal around early literacy that we established through research and over 400 local interviews and survey responses from educational leaders, community organizations, students, and families. Specifically, our goal is that by 2030, twice as many children in Nānākuli and Wai'anae will reach proficiency in 3rd-grade reading, indicating that they are on a path to economic mobility and co-creating a future filled with possibilities. We believe that this pilot program broadly supports our organizational goal beyond our primary focus area and directly aligns with HIDOE literacy initiatives.

This initiative invites students to research, write, and illustrate original books centered on Hawaiian history, culture, and community. By navigating the complete publishing cycle—from initial research to final production—students engage in authentic literacy work that builds critical thinking and narrative skills beyond what short-term assignments can offer. Specifically for students in Kalihi, this place-based approach affirms their identity and elevates local voices. A one-year pilot provides the Department of Education with a clear window to measure success and refine best practices for a culturally responsive curriculum.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your support for this pilot program.

## Sierra Jansons

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**From:** Auerbach, Erin <Erin.Auerbach@teachforamerica.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 10, 2026 1:54 PM  
**To:** EDU Committee  
**Subject:** Testimony in Support of SB2877

**LATE**

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Aloha!

I support this measure as it establishes a one-year pilot program that empowers Kalihi students to strengthen literacy and affirm their cultural identity by researching, writing, and publishing original books focused on Hawaiian history and community.

Mahalo,

Erin



**Erin Pauahi Auerbach** (she/her)  
Managing Director, Development

**Teach For America Hawai'i**  
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808.521.1371 x 27110

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## Sierra Jansons

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**From:** Brown, Grace <Grace.Brown@teachforamerica.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 10, 2026 1:51 PM  
**To:** EDU Committee  
**Subject:** Testimony in Support of SB2877



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Aloha Senators,

I support this measure as it establishes a one-year pilot program that empowers Kalihi students to strengthen literacy and affirm their cultural identity by researching, writing, and publishing original books focused on Hawaiian history and community.

Mahalo,  
Grace Brown  
Manager, Development and Regional Initiatives  
Teach for America Hawai'i

**LATE**

**SB 2877 Relating to Education**

**Testimony in Support of Establishing a One-Year Student-Authored Book Publication Pilot Program  
for 5th Grade Students at Kalihi Public Elementary Schools**

Aloha Senator Kim Chair, Senator Kidani, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I submit this testimony in support of requiring the Hawai'i State Department of Education to establish a one-year Student-Authored Book Publication Pilot Program for fifth-grade students at Kalihi public elementary schools. Our students would be able to participate in the full writing process from research to revision, illustration, and final publication.

**It is very important that this pilot project be one that is integrated into the current curriculum and not an additional program for implementation. The flexibility will allow for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers to plan and collaborate what would fit into our school's calendar and academic schedule.**

Publishing student work fosters pride and ownership and elevates local voices and deepens connections to family and community. This would fit in well with our literacy efforts as students learn to express ideas, respond to feedback, and refine their work—skills that extend beyond the classroom.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your support for this pilot program.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kerry Higa, Principal, Lanakila Elementary School

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**SB-2877**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 3:20:53 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>
Osa Tui Jr.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HSTA stands in support of this measure and we are available for questions. Mahalo.

**LATE**



## PRINCESS MIRIAM K. LIKELIKE ELEMENTARY

1618 Palama Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817  
(808) 832-3370

February 10, 2026

**LATE**

**TO:** Senate Committee on Higher Education

**RE:** SB 2877 - Relating to Education

**Aloha Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee,**

I submit this testimony in **support** of SB 2877, which would establish a one-year Student-Authored Book Publication Pilot Program for fifth-grade students at Kalihi public elementary schools. Through this program, our students would participate in the full writing process—from research and drafting to revision, illustration, and final publication.

It is crucial that this pilot project be integrated into our current curriculum rather than implemented as an additional stand-alone program. This flexibility is essential, as it allows 5th-grade teachers to collaborate and plan how to best fit the project into our school's existing academic schedule.

Publishing student work fosters pride and ownership while elevating local voices and deepening connections to family and community. This aligns perfectly with our literacy efforts, as students learn to express ideas, respond to feedback, and refine their work—skills that extend far beyond the classroom.

The students of Likelike Elementary come from diverse backgrounds, with over 12 languages spoken on campus, including origins from Ukraine, China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Palau, and the continental U.S. A Student-Authored Publication program would provide each student the opportunity to share their unique thoughts, culture, and dreams. The final publication would also serve as a lifelong memory to be shared with their families or housed in the school library permanently.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your support for this pilot program.

Mahalo for your consideration,

**Kelly Bart**

Principal of Likelike Elementary School

## Sierra Jansons

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**From:** Akaka Manfre, Meilan <Meilan.AkakaManfre@teachforamerica.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 10, 2026 4:35 PM  
**To:** EDU Committee  
**Subject:** Testimony in Support of SB2877  
**Categories:** Yellow category



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Aloha Senators,

I support SB2877, as this measure as it establishes a one-year pilot program that empowers Kalihi students to strengthen literacy and affirm their cultural identity by researching, writing, and publishing original books focused on Hawaiian history and community.

Mahalo for all that you do,  
Meilan Akaka Manfre



**Meilan Akaka Manfre (she/her/hers)**  
Executive Director, [Teach For America Hawai'i](#)  
[meilan.akakamanfre@teachforamerica.org](mailto:meilan.akakamanfre@teachforamerica.org)  
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One day, all children will have the opportunity to attain an equitable and excellent education.



## Sierra Jansons

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**From:** Erica Nakanishi-Stanis <erica@hawaiikidscan.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 11, 2026 8:42 AM  
**To:** EDU Committee  
**Cc:** Piikea Kalakau-Baarde; David Sun-Miyashiro  
**Subject:** Support for SB2877



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Aloha Chair Kim,

HawaiiKidsCAN supports SB2877 to establish a one-year pilot program that empowers Kalihi students to strengthen literacy and affirm their cultural identity by researching, writing, and publishing original books focused on Hawaiian history and community.

Mahalo,  
Erica Nakanishi-Stanis

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Erica Nakanishi-Stanis  
Advocacy Director  
[HawaiiKidsCan](#)  
[Schedule a Meeting](#)