



**TESTIMONY OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA  
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026**

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**ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**

S.B. NO. 3179, RELATING TO THE SAFETY OF EDUCATIONAL WORKERS.

**BEFORE THE:**

SENATE COMMITTEES ON EDUCATION AND ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY

**DATE:** Friday, February 6, 2026

**TIME:** 1:00 p.m.

**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 229

**TESTIFIER(S):** Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or  
Anne T. Horiuchi, Deputy Attorney General

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Chairs Kim and Elefante and Members of the Committees:

The Department of the Attorney General (Department) provides the following comments.

The bill requires the Department of Education (DOE) and public charter schools to take certain steps to report incidents of harassment and implement procedures for handling harassment of educational workers.

The proposed section 302A- (a) and section 302D- (a) provide that when an educational worker believes that the worker is being subjected to harassment, the educational worker may inform the worker's immediate supervisor, who must take appropriate action. Page 1, line 16, through page 2, line 9 (section 2), and page 5, line 15, through page 6, line 3 (section 3). To clarify that this reporting procedure applies to situations when the educational worker believes that the worker is being subjected to harassment because of the person's status as an educational worker, the Department recommends amending the proposed sections 302A- (a) on page 2, lines 1-9, and 302D- (a) on page 5, line 16, through page 6, line 3, as follows:

(a) When any educational worker believes that the educational worker is being subjected to harassment, as provided for in section 711-1106 **because of the educational worker's position as an educational worker**, the educational worker may inform the educational worker's immediate supervisor, who shall take appropriate action using the procedures established pursuant to subsection (c)(3), including but not limited to change of workstation, development of a safety plan, mediation,

administrative leave, or other actions in alignment with collective bargaining agreements.

(Suggested changes underscored against the existing text of the bill and in boldface.)

The proposed section 302A- (b) and section 302D- (b) provide that an educational worker seeking judicial protection from harassment shall be entitled to a paid leave of absence, under certain circumstances. Page 2, line 10, through page 3, line 1 (section 2), and page 6, lines 4-15 (section 3). To clarify that the paid leave of absence applies when the educational worker believes that the worker is being subjected to harassment because of the person's status as an educational worker, the Department recommends amending the proposed section 302A- (b) on page 2, line 10 through page 3, line 1, as follows:

(b) An educational worker who seeks judicial protection from harassment, as provided for in section 711-1106 **because of the educational worker's position as an educational worker,** including obtaining a temporary restraining order, shall be entitled to a leave of absence with pay to attend court proceedings related to the protection; provided that the educational worker shall provide documentation to the department verifying the court-related leave of absence, provided further that for those employees included in bargaining units pursuant to section 89-6, the leave of absence shall be negotiated pursuant to section 89-9(a). The duration of the leave of absence with pay shall be reasonable and sufficient to allow the educational worker to fulfill the educational worker's court-related obligations.

(Suggested changes Ramseyered against the existing text of the bill and in boldface.)

The Department recommends the same amendments to section 302D- (b) on page 6, lines 4-15, except that the term "public charter school" is in place of the word "department" (page 6, line 9).

Proposed sections 302A- (c) and 302D- (c) set forth various requirements for the DOE and public charter schools, respectively, to follow. Page 3, line 2, through page 5, line 6 (section 2), and page 6, line 16, through page 8, line 16 (section 3). Paragraph (5) of both new sections requires the DOE and public charter schools to:

Assist educational workers with any legal actions that may arise from harassment, as provided for in section 711-1106, including reimbursing the educational worker for the costs incurred from

serving temporary restraining orders related to the harassment, but shall not include the payment of attorneys' fees or court costs[.]

Page 4, lines 15-21, and page 8, lines 7-13. The Department is concerned that the phrase, "[a]ssist educational workers with any legal actions," could be construed to include providing legal assistance, or to include civil lawsuits relating to the harassment. For clarity, the Department suggests revising paragraph (5) of new subsection (c) on page 4, lines 15-21, and on page 8, lines 7-13, as follows:

Assist educational workers with [any] legal actions to obtain temporary restraining orders that may arise from harassment, as provided for in section 711-1106, because of the educational worker's position as an educational worker, including reimbursing the educational worker for the costs incurred from serving temporary restraining orders related to the harassment, but shall not include the payment of attorneys' fees or court costs[.]

(Suggested changes underscored, bracketed, and stricken against the existing text of the bill and in boldface.)

The Department notes that as written, the bill does not specify that the harassment must come from a source outside of the DOE or charter school. In other words, if school employees believe that another school employee is harassing them because of their positions as educational workers, then the provisions of this bill would apply. If this is not the Legislature's intent, the Department suggests that the bill be amended to include such clarification.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this bill.



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

**Date:** 02/06/2026

**Time:** 01:00 PM

**Location:** CR 229 & Videoconference

**Committee:** EDU/LBT

**Department:** Education

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

**Title of Bill:** SB3179, RELATING TO THE SAFETY OF EDUCATIONAL WORKERS.

**Purpose of Bill:** Requires the Department of Education and public charter schools to take certain steps to report incidents of harassment and implement procedures for handling harassment of educational workers.

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports the underlying goals of SB 3179, to provide additional protections to its employees, but has some requested revisions.

To prevent the disruption of services, the Department recommends revising subsection (a) as follows:

(a) When any educational worker believes that the educational worker is being subjected to harassment, as provided for in section 711-1106, the educational worker may inform the educational worker's immediate supervisor, who shall then offer the educational worker to engage in the process of developing an emergency safety plan.

The Department recommends limiting subsection (d)(5) to preclude civil lawsuits by revising that subsection as follows: "Assist educational workers with the service of temporary restraining orders that may arise from harassment, as provided for section 711-1106, by reimbursing the educational workers for the costs incurred from serving the temporary restraining orders related to the harassment, but shall not include the payment of attorney's fees or court costs."

For clarity in reference to subsection (b) on page 2, the Department recommends defining paid leave as follows: "Paid leave under this subsection may be satisfied through the use of accrued sick leave, vacation leave, administrative leave, or any other paid leave authorized by the employer, and shall not require the employer to provide additional paid leave beyond existing leave benefits."

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to SB 3179.



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**Logan Okita**  
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**Andrea Eshelman**  
Executive Director

**TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
&  
THE HAWAI'I SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY**

**Item: SB 3179 – Relating to the Safety of Educational Workers**

**Position: Support**

**Hearing: Friday, February 6, 2026, 1:00 pm, Room 229**

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

Dear Chairs Kim and Elefante, Vice Chairs Kidani and Lamosao, and members of the committees,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association believes that educational workers play a critical role in keeping our schools safe and supportive for children. When educators and staff face harassment or threats without clear protections or consistent response procedures, it affects not only employees but also students and school communities. As such, we ask that you support S.B. 3179.

The HSTA has been speaking on this topic for many years and applauds the efforts this session to examine how we can protect our teachers and staff at schools around the state. We appreciate the advocates who have worked hard on bills that address workplace safety, and find it important to mention that this piece of legislation creates clarity and accountability when harassment occurs, and requires the Department of Education to act.

Since the pandemic, we've seen attacks on educational workers rise. According to a July 2024 article in Education Week, "57% of teachers now report that they are considering quitting or transferring specifically due to concerns about school climate and safety." Additionally, a Business Insider article from August 2025 shared that "26% of teachers reported experiencing physical violence from parents since the return to in-person school."

A school that is unsafe for a teacher or educational worker is, by definition, an unstable environment for a student. Protecting the worker is a prerequisite for protecting the learner. The Hawai'i State Teachers Association asks your committees to support S.B. 3179.

Mahalo.

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
GOVERNOR



**MAKALAPUA ALENCASTRE, ED. D.**  
CHAIRPERSON

STATE OF HAWAII  
**STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION**  
**(‘AHA KULA HO‘ĀMANA)**

<http://CharterCommission.Hawaii.Gov>  
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1100, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813  
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FOR: SB 3179 RELATING TO THE SAFETY OF EDUCATIONAL WORKERS  
DATE: February 6, 2026  
TIME: 1:00 P.M.  
COMMITTEE: Committee on Education and Committee on Labor & Technology  
ROOM: Conference Room 229 & Videoconference  
FROM: Ed H. Noh, Ed. D., Executive Director  
State Public Charter School Commission

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Chair Mercado Kim, Chair Elefante, and members of the Committees:

The State Public Charter School Commission (“Commission”) appreciates the opportunity to offer testimony in **SUPPORT of SB 3179** which requires the Department of Education and public charter schools to take certain steps to report incidents of harassment and implement procedures for handling harassment of educational workers

The Commission appreciates the inclusion of public charter schools in this measure as charter schools are a part of the public education system. Providing safeguards and measures for educators who encounter instances of harassment is essential to creating a positive school environment.

The Commission is available to work with this committee, the DOE, and public charter schools in moving this legislation forward.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony.



**HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION**  
AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

**RANDY PERREIRA**, Executive Director • Tel: 808.543.0011 • Fax: 808.528.0922

The Thirty-Third Legislature, State of Hawaii  
The Senate  
Committee on Education

Testimony by  
Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 6, 2026

S.B. 3179 — RELATING TO THE SAFETY OF EDUCATIONAL WORKERS

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO supports the intent of S.B. 3179, which requires the Department of Education and public charter schools to take certain steps to report incidents of harassment and implement procedures for handling harassment of educational workers.

For several years now, the HGEA has expressed concern to the DOE about the escalation of violence against employees. We have demanded that both the DOE and Attorney General do more to protect and support employees instead of seeking first to avoid liability. Earlier this school year, a school administrator was brutally assaulted at an Oahu public high school. After the assault, we demanded in a letter to the Superintendent to know what steps the DOE intends to take to prevent such instances from occurring again in the future.

We support the intent of this bill as it also seeks to achieve what we have been demanding from the DOE. Educational workers should feel assured that their employer is committed to taking prompt and effective action against harassing conduct and those who engage in harassing behavior should be held accountable.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 3179.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira  
Executive Director



## UNITED PUBLIC WORKERS

AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO

### THE SENATE KA 'AHA KENEKOA

#### THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE REGULAR SESSION OF 2026

**COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**  
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair  
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

**COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY**  
Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Chair  
Senator Rachele Lamosao, Vice Chair

Friday, February 6, 2026, 1:00 PM  
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

**Re: Testimony on SB3179 – RELATING TO THE SAFETY OF EDUCATIONAL WORKERS**

Chairs Kim and Elefante, Vice Chairs Kidani and Lamosao, and Members of the Committee:

The United Public Workers, AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO (“UPW”) is the exclusive bargaining representative for approximately 14,000 public employees, which includes blue collar, non-supervisory employees in Bargaining Unit 1 and institutional, health, and correctional employees in Bargaining Unit 10, in the State of Hawaii and various counties.

UPW **strongly supports** SB3179, which requires the Department of Education (“DOE”) and public charter schools to take certain steps to report incidents of harassment and implement procedures for handling harassment of educational workers.

We strongly believe that educational workers should feel assured that the DOE and public charter schools are committed to taking effective action against harassment in order to protect the rights and dignity of the hard-working public employees who are tasked with maintaining a positive learning environment for Hawaii’s students.

Given recent events and the apparent rise in incidents of harassment targeting educational workers, it seems evident, unfortunately, that legislation like this is necessary.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

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**Testimony in Support of SB3179  
Relating to the Safety of Educational Workers  
Senate Committee on Education  
Senate Committee on Labor and Technology  
February 6, 2025 | 1:00 p.m.**

Aloha Chairs, Vice Chairs, and members of the committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB3179. I wish I could be there in person for this important hearing.

I'm grateful for the Senate's decision to introduce a bill this session that addresses what happens to educational workers after harassment, threats, and/or assault occur while on the job. This is something that the House has been helping a group of victims address since 2024.

Educational workers have been raising alarms about harassment for years. In 2022, the Department of Education (DOE) formally acknowledged through legislation (HB2125) and testimony that harassment by members of the public was a serious and growing problem. What never followed was a clear, workable system to guide schools or protect employees.

Educational workers are still left without a defined process for reporting harassment, assessing risk, or receiving support. Responses vary depending on who is in charge, and too often the burden is pushed onto the employee experiencing the harm. Up until last session, the Department stood firm on its stance that when an employee is harassed at work that "these are private legal matters that involve personal rights and responsibilities, and funding such actions with public resources may violate constitutional restrictions on the use of public funds for private purposes."

Repeated harassment, stalking, and intimidation cause the same long-term damage as physical assault. The effects include post-traumatic stress, anxiety, hypervigilance, suicidal ideation, and lasting impacts on health and family life. The injury is not less serious because it is psychological rather than physical.

When institutions fail to respond, the harm escalates. Survivors carry the original injury, along with the added trauma of being gaslit, dismissed, or retaliated against for speaking up, while being left to navigate danger on their own. Psychologists describe this type of failure as "institutional betrayal." SB3179 is important because it establishes clear responsibility where none currently exists and sets expectations for how harassment is handled, so employees are supported rather than left exposed.

This experience is not uncommon. A single known perpetrator has targeted educational workers for more than a decade. Numerous temporary restraining orders have been filed against this individual, most by DOE employees. I am one of them.

My own ordeal illustrates why this matters. The harassment I experienced did not end when I left the DOE. After a court issued three-year injunction against harassment expired against my perpetrator, the behavior continued and followed recognized patterns of stalking until very recently. This was not a one-time incident. It was prolonged, destabilizing, and deeply damaging.

Throughout this process, the absence of a standardized response placed my family and me directly at risk. This started when employees under my supervision raised safety concerns. I was advised by the Department to pursue a temporary restraining order on their behalf, even though supervisors cannot legally do so. That guidance put a target on me and my family.

When I later sought a restraining order for my own protection, no one from the Department appeared to represent me. I faced the situation alone, with my family absorbing the consequences. Despite repeated requests and multiple meetings with DOE leadership, no safety plan was ever implemented, even though the courts had deemed the threat credible by granting the injunction against harassment.

This is what happens when systems rely on informal judgment instead of clear policy. Responsibility is shifted downward and risk is normalized. Trauma is treated as an individual problem rather than an institutional failure.

SB3179 ensures that when harassment occurs, educational workers are not left isolated or exposed. It recognizes that **response matters as much as prevention**.

It is worth noting that the Judiciary's legislative package includes bills that authorizes public employers to petition for TROs and injunctions against employment-related harassment, citing the rising threats targeting public officials.

These bills cover state leadership like the Governor, department heads, judges and lawmakers. It does not include state workers like educators. I hope it's something we can consider, whether it's this session or next, for those working on our frontlines, like all of you.

Thank you for your support of this important measure and for prioritizing the safety and well-being of our educational workers.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Chambers

**SB-3179**

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 10:49:24 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/6/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joel Kawachi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

## Testimony in Support, With Comments

### S.B. 3179 – Relating to the Safety of Educational Workers

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on S.B. 3179. I write in **support of the intent of this measure**, which seeks to strengthen protections for educational workers and promote safer working environments across our public schools.

As a school-level administrator, I have seen firsthand the increasing complexity of safety concerns faced by educators, administrators, and support staff. Clear procedures, consistent training, and defined supports are essential to ensuring that educational workers feel protected while allowing schools to maintain stable and effective operations.

I would also like to note that I previously **supported Natalie’s Law (HB 1592), Senate Bill 2900, and House Bill 2185**, all of which similarly aim to improve protections, accountability, and clarity related to the safety of educational workers. S.B. 3179 continues this important conversation and reflects the Legislature’s ongoing commitment to this important issue.

In offering my support, I respectfully share a few **implementation-level considerations** from a school operations perspective. I do so with the understanding that the Department of Education and school administrators are already managing complex safety, reporting, and compliance responsibilities, and that many of the concepts reflected in this measure align with existing efforts currently underway.

- **Operational capacity and consistency:** The bill includes several thoughtful provisions intended to strengthen response and reporting practices at both the school and department levels. As these responsibilities are expanded, clarifying how investigations, reporting expectations, and safety planning will be supported centrally may help ensure consistent and effective implementation across schools of varying size, staffing, and resources.
- **Administrative discretion and clarity:** While timely coordination with law enforcement is an important component of employee safety, additional guidance may help ensure administrators have the flexibility to respond appropriately based on the specific

circumstances of each incident, while balancing employee protection, due process, de-escalation strategies, and existing DOE protocols.

- **Training and support:** Annual training and emergency safety planning are essential components of a comprehensive safety framework, and many schools already participate in related training efforts. Aligning new requirements with existing DOE safety training structures and providing adequate implementation support will help ensure these initiatives are effective and sustainable.
- **Good-faith protections:** School administrators are often responsible for carrying out these responsibilities in real time, sometimes under urgent and emotionally charged circumstances. Consideration may be given to ensuring that administrators and employees acting in good faith under established procedures are appropriately supported as they fulfill these duties.

I would also note that while S.B. 3179 thoughtfully expands protections and services for educational workers, successful implementation will depend on appropriate **alignment of resources**. As the Legislature considers this measure, I respectfully suggest that resource needs associated with training, investigations, reporting, and safety planning be evaluated in coordination with the budget process, so that schools can carry out these responsibilities consistently and effectively.

In addition, as the Legislature considers how these responsibilities are carried out in practice, it may be helpful to evaluate whether a **centralized incident response coordination function** could support educational workers following serious incidents, including assaults. A coordinated response function could assist with temporary restraining order navigation, communication with prosecutors and law enforcement, coordination of counseling services, and guidance related to workers' compensation, employee assistance programs, and employee benefits. Providing this type of centralized support could improve timeliness and consistency for affected employees while reducing administrative strain at the school level.

I offer these comments in the spirit of strengthening the bill and supporting its successful implementation. I appreciate the Legislature's continued focus on the safety and well-being of educational workers and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,  
**Joel Kawachi**  
Athletic Director  
Moanalua High School