

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

April 2, 2026

WRITTEN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

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

DATE: April 2, 2026

TIME: 2:00 PM

LOCATION: Conference Room 325 & Videoconference State Capitol

TITLE OF BILL: SB 3262 SD1 HTSB; BOE; Executive Director; Appointment; Advice and Consent

POSITION: Opposes SB 3262 SD1

Chair David Tarnas, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs:

The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) respectfully opposes SB3262, SD1 relating to education, which would require the board to employ an executive director for a term of up to four years, who shall be appointed by the board of education, **with the advice and consent of the senate.**

There is already a process in place that is prescribed by law pertaining to the hiring and termination of the Executive Director. Hawai'i Revised Statutes clearly states:

§302A-801 f) *The board may employ an executive director for a term of up to four years, who shall be appointed by the board of education without regard to chapters 76 and 89; provided that the board shall submit a nominee to the board of education for approval or disapproval; provided further that if the nominee is disapproved, the board shall submit another nominee to the board of education for approval or disapproval. The board may terminate the executive director's contract for cause; provided that the board shall submit the recommendation for termination to the board of education for approval or disapproval.*

HTSB is tasked by law to establish licensing and certification standards that govern teacher licensing and certification in Hawai'i to ensure that public-school children in Hawai'i are taught by teachers who are qualified to practice the profession of teaching. The precedent across Hawai'i's education-related boards and commissions is clear and consistent: executive directors are appointed by their respective governing boards, not by external political bodies. The only exception in recent memory was the Governor's appointment to the Executive Director of the School Facilities Authority (SFA) when it was first established, and then later, even this was subsequently corrected. On June 5, 2023, the Governor signed legislation transferring that appointment authority back to the SFA Board, where it properly belongs, and the current Executive Director now serves SFA under that structure. This pattern is uniform across comparable agencies: the EOEL Executive Director is appointed by the Early Learning Board; the Charter Commission Executive Director is appointed by the Charter School Commission; the State Librarian is appointed by the Board of Education; and the SFA Executive Director is appointed by the SFA Board. It is worth emphasizing that not even the Superintendent

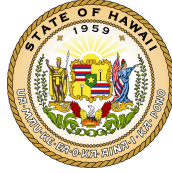
of Education, the highest-ranking education official in the state, is subject to Senate confirmation. SB3262, SD1 would therefore impose a layer of political oversight that has no precedent in Hawai'i's education governance structure and would fundamentally undermine the Board of Education's and HTSB's authority to identify and appoint leadership best suited to carry out their respective missions.

The Separation of Powers doctrine was established to prevent tyranny from a single branch of government and preserve the integrity of U.S. citizens. **This bill encroaches on this doctrine in that it requires the Board of Education, a part of the Executive Branch, to appoint the Executive Director only upon the advice and consent of the senate. This bill does not allow the Board of Education the autonomy to appoint the Executive Director on their own accord**

HTSB is tasked by law to establish licensing and certification standards that govern teacher licensing and certification in Hawai'i to ensure that public-school children in Hawai'i are taught by teachers who are qualified to practice the profession of teaching.

This bill removes the Board of Education's decision-making authority to determine who is best qualified to be appointed as the Executive Director of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board. This bill also takes away from the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) the autonomy to nominate whom the HTSB believes will understand the HTSB's mission and vision, will implement the HTSB's decisions, and will fulfill the HTSB's responsibilities, which are to ensure that highly qualified teachers are teaching our students in the public schools. Therefore, we humbly ask this committee to oppose this bill.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



ROY M. TAKUMI
CHAIRPERSON

**STATE OF HAWAII
BOARD OF EDUCATION
PAPA HO'ONA'AUAO**
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Thursday, April 2, 2026
2:00 p.m.
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 325

Measure: Senate Bill 3262 SD1, Relating to Education

Purpose of Measure:

Requires that the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board submit three nominees for its Executive Director to the Board of Education. Requires the Board of Education to appoint an Executive Director from the nominees on the list, subject to advice and consent of the Senate. Effective 3/22/2075.

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee:

The Board of Education (Board) respectfully offers comments on Senate Bill 3262 SD1.

The Board notes that executive directors of State offices are not consistently required to be confirmed by the Senate, and that the process proposed in the measure to appoint as well as confirm the executive director of the Hawaii Teachers Standards Board is an atypical one.

Should the Legislature determine in its wisdom that the proposed process for appointing the executive director of the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board is in the public interest, however, the Board will fulfill its responsibility to carry out the bill's intent.

The measure is silent on what is expected as far as process, should the Senate decide not to confirm the nominee appointed by the Board; the Board requests clarity in this regard.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify on behalf of the Board.



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TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Item: SB 3262, SD1 – Relating to Education

Position: Support

Hearing: Thursday, April 2, 2026, 2:00 pm, Room 325

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

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association (HSTA) **strongly supports** S.B. 3262, SD1, which seeks to refine the appointment process for the Executive Director of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB). As an organization representing the interests of educators across the islands, we believe that robust oversight in this selection process is essential for the future of our profession.

The HTSB plays a critical role in our educational ecosystem, directly impacting all teachers statewide as well as new and upcoming educators entering the field. The board's decisions on licensing and standards set the foundation for the quality of instruction in our classrooms.

This measure ensures that the Executive Director is thoroughly reviewed by the Hawai'i State Senate through the advice and consent process. We believe this additional layer of scrutiny is vital to ensure that the individual leading this influential body is properly suited for the responsibilities of the job.

By requiring a list of three nominees and involving both the Board of Education and the Senate, S.B. 3262, SD1 promotes transparency and accountability. This collaborative approach helps guarantee that the HTSB is led by a highly qualified professional dedicated to upholding the highest standards for Hawai'i's educators.

We respectfully request that the committee pass this measure.

Mahalo

SB-3262-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2026 3:56:41 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hope McKeen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my strong support for SB 3262. As a veteran educator with years of service in our classrooms and a deep commitment to the professional standards of our calling, I believe this measure is a necessary step toward restoring faith in the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB).

I want to emphasize the critical need for accountability and executive oversight from the perspective of a teacher in the field.

For too long, there has been a perceived lack of checks and balances regarding the leadership at HTSB. The Executive Director wields immense influence over our licenses, our professional standing, and the entry requirements for new colleagues, and Teacher Preparation Programs. However, the current Board has struggled to hold the executive leadership accountable to the very teachers it serves. When leadership is not held to a high standard of transparency, responsiveness, and collaboration the entire profession feels the impact.

By requiring Senate confirmation, we ensure that the Executive Director is vetted not just by a small board, but by the public and our elected officials. This process demands a level of professional scrutiny that the current system lacks. Involving both the Board of Education and the Senate in the selection of a director ensures that the person in this role is answerable to a broader range of stakeholders.

Through my 20 years of teaching, I have seen how administrative bottlenecks hinder progress. We need a qualified leader who remains flexible during a teacher shortage, ensuring both high standards and sufficient staffing in our classrooms.

This bill provides the mechanism to ensure the Executive Director is a highly qualified professional who remains accountable to the educators of Hawai'i and the public interest.

I urge you to pass SB 3262 to ensure that the standards we are held to in the classroom are mirrored by the leadership at the HTSB.

SB-3262-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2026 4:16:12 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ryan Tong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Ryan Tong, Im a 14 year veteran of teaching, VP of HSTA Leeward Chapter and have heard plenty of times difficulty with new teachers trying to get their certificates, but have encountered roadblock after roadblock and quit the teaching profession all together. There needs to be more accountability at the top so that we can address the teaching shortage and make decisions that empower and not tie the hands of our aspiring educators. we need standards, but we also need implimentation that makes sense.

Hawaii State Legislature

Testimony in Support of SB 3262, SD1

Relating to Education

Description:

Requires that the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board submit three nominees for its Executive Director to the Board of Education. Requires the Board of Education to appoint an Executive Director from the nominees on the list, subject to advice and consent of the Senate. Effective 3/22/2075.

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

My name is **Amber Riel**, and I am a Nationally Board Certified veteran math teacher with over 20 years of experience in Hawaii's classrooms. My career has been defined by the high standards set by the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board, through which I acquired advanced dual licensure in both secondary mathematics and special education.

I am writing to express my **strong support for SB3262, SD1**. This measure introduces vital checks and balances to the selection of the Executive Director for the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board. By requiring a list of three nominees for Board of Education approval, with the advice and consent of the Senate, this measure ensures a high level of transparency and stakeholder engagement.

The Executive Director holds a pivotal role in governing teacher licensure. As such, the appointment process for selecting the person who will serve as Executive Director should also be just as robust and rigorous as the standards and process we require of our educators. This collaborative oversight ensures that the individual leading the board possesses the qualifications, professional credibility, and vetted authority necessary to provide our keiki with the high-quality education they deserve.

I respectfully urge you to pass SB3262, SD1, to ensure the continued integrity of teacher licensure in our state. Mahalo for your time and for your commitment to Hawaii's educators and keiki.

Respectfully submitted,

Amber Riel, NBCT

Secondary Mathematics & Special Education

SB-3262-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2026 9:09:34 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anika Agerlie	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and members of the committee,

I am writing in strong support of S.B. 3262, SD1, which seeks to refine the appointment process for the Executive Director of the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB). As a current Hawai‘i public school teacher, I believe that robust oversight in this selection process is essential for the future of our profession.

The HTSB plays a critical role in our educational ecosystem, directly impacting all teachers statewide as well as new and upcoming educators entering the field. The board's decisions on licensing and standards set the foundation for the quality of instruction in our classrooms.

This measure ensures that the Executive Director is thoroughly reviewed by the Hawai‘i State Senate through the advice and consent process. I believe this additional layer of scrutiny is vital to ensure that the individual leading this influential body is properly suited for the responsibilities of the job.

By requiring a list of three nominees and involving both the Board of Education and the Senate, S.B. 3262, SD1 promotes transparency and accountability. This collaborative approach helps guarantee that the HTSB is led by a highly qualified professional dedicated to upholding the highest standards for Hawai‘i’s educators.

I respectfully request that the committee pass this measure.

Mahalo,

Anika Agerlie, 2nd Grade Teacher

Hōnaunau Elementary School

SB-3262-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2026 11:17:10 AM

Testimony for JHA on 4/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brittney Hedlund	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and members of the committee,
The Hawai‘i State Teachers Association (HSTA) strongly supports S.B. 3262, SD1, which seeks to refine the appointment process for the Executive Director of the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB). As an organization representing the interests of educators across the islands, we believe that robust oversight in this selection process is essential for the future of our profession. The HTSB plays a critical role in our educational ecosystem, directly impacting all teachers statewide as well as new and upcoming educators entering the field. The board’s decisions on licensing and standards set the foundation for the quality of instruction in our classrooms. This measure ensures that the Executive Director is thoroughly reviewed by the Hawai‘i State Senate through the advice and consent process. We believe this additional layer of scrutiny is vital to ensure that the individual leading this influential body is properly suited for the responsibilities of the job. By requiring a list of three nominees and involving both the Board of Education and the Senate, S.B. 3262, SD1 promotes transparency and accountability. This collaborative approach helps guarantee that the HTSB is led by a highly qualified professional dedicated to upholding the highest standards for Hawai‘i’s educators. We respectfully request that the committee pass this measure.

Mahalo nui

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and members of the committee,

I strongly support S.B. 3262, SD1, which seeks to refine the appointment process for the Executive Director of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB).

I submit this testimony as a classroom teacher who has been directly and negatively impacted by the current systems and leadership within HTSB. The decisions made at this level are not theoretical—they have immediate and lasting consequences on educators' ability to remain in the profession and support their students.

The HTSB holds significant authority over teacher licensure, and with that authority must come accountability. In my case, despite meeting requirements and following the guidance provided to me, I experienced prolonged delays, inconsistent expectations, and a lack of urgency in resolving my licensure status. These were not minor procedural issues; they affected my employment stability, access to benefits, and long-term ability to remain in the classroom.

More concerning is that these experiences point to a broader issue: when leadership operates without sufficient oversight, these patterns are allowed to continue. The result is a system that places unnecessary barriers on educators instead of supporting them, at a time when Hawai'i **cannot** afford to lose teachers.

S.B. 3262, SD1 directly addresses this problem. By requiring Senate advice and consent for the Executive Director position, this measure introduces a critical layer of public accountability. It ensures that the individual in this role is thoroughly vetted and held responsible not only to the Board, but to the people of Hawai'i, especially the educators and students most affected by these decisions. Requiring multiple nominees and involving both the Board of Education and the Senate also strengthens transparency and prevents leadership decisions from occurring without meaningful checks and balances.

This measure is not simply about improving process; it is about addressing a system where the lack of oversight has already had real consequences for educators across the state.

Without this level of accountability, the same issues will continue. With it, there is a clear opportunity to ensure that future leadership is responsive, transparent, and aligned with the needs of Hawai'i's teachers and students.

The decisions made by HTSB leadership are already shaping the experiences of educators today. This measure ensures that those decisions are made with the level of accountability they require. For these reasons, I respectfully and firmly urge the committee to pass S.B. 3262, SD1.

Mahalo,

Shawna Nishimoto