

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:11:07 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Roy Kainoa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of SB3334 and to share concerns about how school leadership is currently set up base on what i have seen in my district.

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 11:04:22 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alan Kumalae	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Committee on Education,

I am writing in strong support of SB 3334 and to share concerns about how school leadership is currently set up, based on what I have seen in my district.

The Department of Education has too many layers of bureaucracy, and the higher up decisions are made, the more disconnected leadership can feel from students and families. This has been clear in the way the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) overseeing schools in my district operates. Oversight issues and administrative decisions often come from a narrow point of view, including placing people in leadership roles (like Principals) who are their friends, instead of responding to person who can best lead the school, who has an understanding of the community where the students reside and who can relate to the students and faculty. Hiring the wrong person has led to retirements and loss of teachers and administrators.

Repealing the CAS position could help by bringing accountability closer to the school level. Right now the Superintendent has no clue as to what the CAS are doing and is totally disconnected from what is going on in the schools. In my experience Principles are deferring many decisions to the CAS who does not have a strong understanding of the students and families being affected, which creates a growing gap between leadership and school communities.

One of the most concerning effects of this disconnect is on students. When leadership feels distant or unresponsive, students can start to feel like their voices do not matter or that no one is really listening to them. Over time, this weakens trust and engagement in school.

SB 3334 is an opportunity to cut down on unnecessary bureaucracy, strengthen local accountability, and keep school leadership connected to the students and communities they serve. Thank you for taking the time to consider this measure.

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 9:40:56 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

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

Comments:

Committee on Education,

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Mahalo,

Blake Kainoa



**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 12:04:56 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Shirley Maeshiro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support Bill SB3334

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 12:40:41 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ellen Freitas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Committee on Education,

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**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 12:53:47 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Garrett Freitas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Committee on Education,

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SB 3334 is an opportunity to cut down on unnecessary bureaucracy, strengthen local accountability, and keep school leadership connected to the students and communities they serve. Thank you

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 12:31:39 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Natalie Lum	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Committee on Education,

I am writing in strong support of SB 3334 and to share concerns about how school leadership is currently set up, based on what I have seen in my district.

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Natalie Lum



**LATE**

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 1:47:49 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Noelle Lindenmann	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing today to submit testimony in strong support of SB3334.

I am a community mentor with Kealakehe's STEM Academy on Big Island and believe that this bill would enable our local public schools to support our local community. Our communities across the state are diverse in needs and abilities, and having schools empowered to do what is best for students locally via reducing bureaucracy at the CAS level with School Community Councils and local faculty will be what is best for our students.

According to the recent Civil Beat article about funding discrepancies, as much as \$4 million dollars are unaccounted for. If the monies are allocated correctly, this could redirect money for opportunities for students. If we reduce bureaucratic levels, by reducing positions at the district level, this could redirect the taxpayer burden directly to students for opportunities versus district staff opportunities.

Our families and faculties know how to best support our students. We should enable our communities to offer the best public school opportunities for students, and this bill would support that.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass this bill.

Mahalo for this opportunity to provide testimony,

Noelle Lindenmann, Kailua-Kona

**LATE**

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 6:40:31 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jill Lucas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Committee on Education,

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**LATE**

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 5:48:24 AM  
Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Germaine Meyers	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF S.B. 3334

Relating to Education; Accountability; School Community Councils

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

My name is Germaine Meyers. I respectfully submit this written testimony in **strong support of S.B. 3334**.

I am offering this testimony not only as a community member, but as someone with direct, lived experience under the governance structure created by Act 51. I have served a school year term as a School Community Council (SCC) community representative at Nānākuli High and Intermediate School. I saw firsthand how the current structure—particularly the role of the Complex Area Superintendent—undermined the very accountability and shared decision-making that Act 51 claimed to promote.

During my tenure, our School Community Council attempted to carry out one of its core statutory responsibilities: the evaluation of the school principal. Despite clear intent in law that SCCs play a meaningful role in principal evaluation and selection, our efforts were effectively blocked at the Complex Area level. Community input was filtered, diluted, or halted altogether before it could reach the Superintendent or Board in any meaningful way.

This experience revealed a fundamental flaw in the Act 51 framework:

authority was inserted between schools and the Superintendent without corresponding transparency or accountability. The Complex Area Superintendent position became a gatekeeper—one not directly accountable to the school community—rather than a support structure.

S.B. 3334 appropriately addresses this problem by:

- Repealing the Complex Area Superintendent position;
- Restoring a clearer, more direct line of accountability to the Superintendent of Education;

- Strengthening the role of School Community Councils by ensuring their evaluations are transmitted directly to the Superintendent; and
- Clarifying roles and authority so that responsibility aligns with decision-making power.

Most importantly, this bill honors the original promise of Act 51: that parents and community members would have a meaningful voice in school governance, not a symbolic one.

For communities like Nānākuli—where trust in institutions must be earned through transparency and respect—S.B. 3334 is a necessary course correction. It reduces administrative layers that obscure accountability and reinforces the principle that those closest to the school community must be heard.

For these reasons, and based on direct experience, I strongly urge your support of S.B. 3334.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Ke Akua pū,

Germaine Meyers

## **Testimony in Support of SB3334**

Relating to the Administration of the Public School System

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 3334, which seeks to streamline the administration of Hawaii's public school system by repealing the Complex Area Superintendent position and clarifying accountability within the principal evaluation and appointment process.

I firmly believe there must be greater accountability for principals and school leadership. At this time, there are barriers within the current structure that prevent true accountability, and unfortunately, it is our students who are affected.

As a parent of four children in the public school system, I have personally experienced ongoing concerns involving both academic and personal matters. I have brought these issues to school leadership as well as to the Complex Area Superintendent. Despite doing so, many of the same issues have continued—now for five years and counting. This pattern reflects a system where concerns are elevated, yet meaningful resolution and accountability are difficult to achieve.

Too many layers within the system create confusion, silos, and delays in action. When responsibility is diffused across multiple levels of administration, it becomes harder to identify who is ultimately accountable. This lack of clarity opens the door to inefficiencies and, ultimately, failure for our students.

SB3334 provides an opportunity to simplify the chain of command and clarify authority. By ensuring that School Community Councils submit principal evaluations directly to the Superintendent of Education—who holds final authority in principal appointments—we strengthen transparency and create clearer lines of responsibility. Additionally, requiring the Department of Education to adopt new rules to manage reassigned duties and provide training for principals and educators ensures that leadership remains supported while also being held accountable.

Our students deserve a system where concerns are addressed promptly, leadership is responsible for outcomes, and accountability is clear. Streamlining the structure is a critical step toward that goal.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to support and advance SB3334.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Kaui Asinsin

The Thirty-Third Legislature, State of Hawai'i  
The Senate Committee on Education

Testimony by: Kori Takaki, Kealakehe High School Principal

February 13, 2026

S.B. 3334 – RELATING TO EDUCATION

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to S.B. 3334.

As a high school principal working within Hawai'i's tri-level system, I strongly oppose repealing the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position and altering the current process for principal evaluation and appointment.

The CAS structure was intentionally created under Act 51 to correct an unmanageable span of control under the former district model. That change matters at the school level. High schools are complex organizations — we manage graduation pathways, special education compliance, athletics, safety, staffing, budgeting, and college and career systems simultaneously. Having a CAS who understands our complex, feeder patterns, and community context provides necessary instructional leadership, operational guidance, and timely support. Removing that layer would dilute responsiveness and coherence across schools.

For outer island schools, this change would likely increase inequity rather than improve outcomes. Schools on neighbor islands already operate with fewer nearby resources and less immediate access to central office support. The CAS structure provides critical, context-specific leadership that understands the geographic, staffing, and community realities unique to outer island complexes. Eliminating that level of support would widen the gap between O'ahu and neighbor island schools, reduce responsiveness, and create greater instability in leadership systems.

Regarding principal evaluation and selection, clear and negotiated systems already exist. SCCs have an established process to provide input. Formal evaluations occur through CESSA, which is governed through collective bargaining. Principal selection procedures are also collaboratively developed. Changing these processes in statute risks destabilizing systems that are working and may conflict with negotiated agreements.

School systems require clarity, stability, and aligned leadership structures. While refinement and improvement are always appropriate, dismantling core components of Act 51 would create uncertainty rather than strengthen schools. From the perspective of a sitting principal responsible for the daily operation and long-term success of a high school community, I urge you to oppose S.B. 3334.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Kori Takaki  
High School Principal

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 10:17:08 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Gary Kanamori	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

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

My name is Gary Kanamori, and I am writing to express my personal opposition to SB3334. While I stand in solidarity with my colleagues in the Baldwin-Kekaulike-Kūlanihāko'i-Maui Complex Area, I wanted to share my individual perspective as someone with a personal and professional stake in Hawaii's public schools. I am a proud product of Maui's public education system and a parent to children currently attending our public schools. Furthermore, I currently serve the very community my family has been deeply involved in for over 40 years. My family's dental practice has cared for many of the same community members I now serve as Principal, often seeing them grow from children into parents themselves. My commitment to these "schoolhouses" is rooted in decades of community trust and service.

I am the current Principal of Pukalani Elementary, and I previously served as the Principal of Princess Nāhi'ena'ena Elementary in Lahaina, including during the 2023 Maui wildfires. Throughout my career, I have served under several Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) who were instrumental in my development and my schools' success. From my time as a teacher and Vice Principal in Pearl City-Waipahu under CAS Oshio, CAS Luke, and CAS Hui, to my current work with CAS Yatsushiro, I have seen that this role is the vital link that keeps our schools aligned with the state's direction.

A CAS is not just an administrator; they are the essential extension of state leadership. I fully support our State Superintendent's vision for excellence, but for that vision to be implemented with consistency and fidelity, we need regional leaders who can translate high-level goals into local action. My CASs have always maintained a "pulse" on the community, ensuring that state-level policies are grounded in the realities of our diverse neighborhoods.

This was never more evident than during my tenure in Lahaina. Leading a school through one of the deadliest wildfires in our nation's history, where two-thirds of my students and one-third of my staff lost their homes, required more than just central directives. It required the steady, on-island leadership of CAS Rebecca Winkie and CAS Desiree Sides. The scope of recovery required constant collaboration with MEMA, FEMA, the Army Corps of Engineers, the EPA, and various County agencies. These were efforts that were far beyond the capacity of individual school sites. Without that complex area layer of leadership, I would have had to choose between coordinating federal disaster relief and being present for my traumatized students and staff. No principal should be forced to make that choice. Despite losing her own home, Dr. Winkie

provided the coordination we needed to stabilize Princess Nāhi‘ena‘ena Elementary and our schools in the Lahainaluna complex. Dr. Winkie and CAS Sides presence allowed the Department’s resources and the Superintendent’s support to get exactly where they needed to go, right when it mattered most.

Eliminating the CAS role does not streamline the Department; it removes the very conduit that ensures the State Superintendent’s leadership has a direct and effective reach into every complex area. I urge you to maintain the current complex structure so that we can continue to work as one cohesive, supported system.

Respectfully,

Gary Kanamori

Principal, Pukalani Elementary School

## **Testimony- Richard Carosso**

### **Testimony in Opposition to SB 3334 – Relating to Education**

February 11, 2026

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Richard Carosso, Principal of Lahainaluna High School. I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to SB 3334, which proposes the elimination of Complex Area Superintendents.

In the aftermath of the August 2023 fires, the leadership of our Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) was indispensable. During an unprecedented crisis, our CAS served as a critical buffer for Lahaina principals—shielding schools from layers of bureaucracy, managing media pressures, and helping us communicate with our communities in a unified and consistent manner. This allowed us, as school leaders, to remain focused where we were needed most: on the immediate and long-term needs of our students and staff.

Our CAS was instrumental in coordinating resources and facilitating inter-agency support. The scope of recovery required collaboration with MEMA, FEMA, the Army Corps of Engineers, the EPA, and County agencies. These efforts were beyond the capacity of individual school sites, and the State level was understandably too far removed to respond to the highly localized and urgent needs we faced. The Complex Area structure provided the necessary bridge—ensuring that schools were supported, heard, and connected to critical resources.

Equally important, our CAS served as a strategic thought partner and sounding board for principals navigating extraordinary circumstances. She recognized shared challenges across schools—particularly around student and staff mental health, operational disruptions, and evolving DOE expectations—and helped coordinate shared solutions. This alignment prevented fragmentation and strengthened our collective response.

The Complex Area also provided essential logistical oversight, including coordination of transportation, food service, and the unique needs of Ka Papahana Kaiapuni schools. These operational systems required cross-school leadership and problem-solving that individual campuses could not effectively manage alone during crisis conditions.

Most importantly, the strength of our Complex Area lies in relationships. The structure is small enough to foster trust, collaboration, and genuine understanding of each school community. Our CAS knows our schools, our students, and us as leaders. Through regular Complex Area principal meetings, we have built professional trust and shared purpose. These relationships cannot be replicated in a larger, more centralized structure.

Especially in times of crisis, leadership must be close enough to understand context and agile enough to respond quickly. The Complex Area model provided exactly that for Lahaina schools.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to oppose SB 3334.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

*Richard Carosso*

Richard Carosso  
Principal, Lahaina High School



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

**Date:** 02/13/2026

**Time:** 01:05 PM

**Location:** CR 229 & Videoconference

**Committee:** EDU

**Department:** Education

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

**Title of Bill:** SB3334, RELATING TO EDUCATION.

**Purpose of Bill:** Repeals the Complex Area Superintendent position. Clarifies that School Community Councils shall submit principal evaluations to the Superintendent of Education, who shall have final authority to appoint a principal. Requires the Department of Education to adopt rules.

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) opposes SB 3334. The proposed elimination of the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position would undermine a proven regional leadership structure that supports operational stability, accountability, and student achievement across Hawaii's unique statewide school system. The Department relies on Complex Area Superintendents to provide critical oversight, coordination, and support across 258 schools, ensuring K-12 alignment, timely resolution of community and personnel matters, and effective implementation of statewide priorities across seven islands.

The Legislature established the current structure of complex areas and CASs in 2004 via Act 51, "Reinventing Education Act of 2004." Act 51 moved decision making authority closer to the schools. Over the two decades since Act 51, Hawaii's public schools have demonstrated sustained and measurable improvements in student outcomes.

Strong student outcomes depend on a strong management structure capable of auditing, evaluating, and supporting the workforce at the regional level. On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Hawaii has moved from the bottom ten states to the top fifteen nationwide in fourth grade reading over the past two decades, and from the bottom ten to the national average in eighth grade math. On the Smarter Balanced Assessment, Hawaii currently has the highest proficiency levels in language arts and the third highest in mathematics among participating states, and is nearing a return to pre-pandemic proficiency levels in both subjects. These results reflect consistent effort by teachers, principals, and school teams operating within a regional leadership framework that provides targeted support, accountability, and instructional

alignment.

The elimination of the CAS position raises several key concerns regarding the impact on schools. The CAS provides essential instructional and regional leadership for two to four school complexes, each complex consisting of a high school and the elementary and middle/intermediate schools that feed into it. The CAS offers essential, region-specific support and coordination among schools in a complex. This includes regional workforce development, managing intergovernmental relationships, and rapid resolution of escalated parental and community concerns. Furthermore, the CAS is the Department's lead for principal performance oversight and administers the Comprehensive Evaluation System for School Administrators (CESSA). Eliminating this position removes the critical layer of support, evaluation, and accountability that ensures school leaders are focused on system and school improvement goals, creating a void that would leave principals without the dedicated oversight and guidance necessary for effective system-wide improvement. There is also a significant risk to fiscal and personnel operations and accountability. The CAS, through specialized staff such as Human Resource Regional Officers (HRROs) and District Educational Specialists (DEs) for special education, ensures that resources are deployed effectively and tailored to the unique needs of each school within the complex area. This direct support is crucial for principals to manage their personnel and budgets efficiently.

The CAS role is not an administrative redundancy but the foundational management structure that supports and evaluates school principals and the entire workforce at the regional level. The significant academic gains demonstrated on both NAEP and state assessments reflect a consistent, coordinated effort by teachers, principals, and school teams operating within this effective regional leadership framework. Removing this leadership layer would create an authority gap, disrupt fiscal and personnel operations, weaken support for principals and schools, and ultimately place student achievement at risk.

The Department respectfully requests that the legislature recognize the vital role the CAS plays in supporting school principals and sustaining the success of the tri-level system. The Department recommends deferring the measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 3334.



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

**Senate Committee on Education**  
**Friday, February 13, 2026**  
1:05 p.m.  
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 229

**Measure: Senate Bill 3334, Relating to Education**

**Purpose of Measure:** Repeals the Complex Area Superintendent position. Clarifies that School Community Councils shall submit principal evaluations to the Superintendent of Education, who shall have final authority to appoint a principal. Requires the Department of Education to adopt rules.

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

The Board of Education respectfully offers the following comments, expressing serious concerns with Senate Bill 3334:

- The role and responsibilities of the complex area superintendents exist to provide streamlined support and resources that would otherwise have to be duplicated at each school.
- Complex area superintendents provide decision-making, coordination, and accountability structures that schools and the Department depend on to function effectively.
- Having leadership within each community is crucial to supporting the schools, staff, students, parents, and partners. Enrollment may have shifted in various schools, complexes, and communities, but the role and responsibilities of the complex area superintendent have not gotten easier or lessened.

The Board defers to the Department of Education on the more specific impacts of eliminating the position of complex area superintendent.

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

Testimony on SB3334- Corey Allen (Principal, HIDOE)

Dear Madame Chair Kim,

As a Principal in the Hawaii Department of Education, I am proud to hold a great responsibility to my students, my teachers, my staff, my families, and ultimately my community. I submit this testimony today as a representative of one school. My school alone serves over 550 students. This requires a faculty and staff of at least 100 people, which in turn also serves a parent population of roughly 1,000. One could argue that I am in charge of or serving 1,650 individuals every day.

Your bill, which calls for the dismantling of the complex area superintendent position, does so in the efforts to do away with the unclear authority structures of our current situation. It seeks to empower our school community councils, and practically direct all final authority such as Principal selection to the superintendent of the state. Unfortunately, this proposition does not take into account the sheer numbers that are at play.

The average size of a school district in the United States serves roughly 5,000 students. For comparison's sake, superintendents of these school districts serve a cohesion of schools or communities that our complex area superintendents of Hawaii serve. However, our numbers outweigh the average significantly.

My one school exists in one complex, which consists of 7 elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. This complex exists amongst two other complexes in a complex area. Therefore, a complex area consists of roughly 3 middle schools, 3 high schools, and between 10-15 elementary schools. Using my school as an example, this implies that whoever leads the complex area oversees at least 1,900 employees, serving over 10,000 students, and serving 19,000 parents. This is looking at the numbers conservatively. It's actually much higher.

As a Principal, I do my best to NOT contact my complex area superintendent. As many hierarchy based jobs operate, my job is to make sure I stay out of my boss's hair since he already has enough problems. Nonetheless, I still have to call him every once in a while. One thing I always remember when I call him, is that my problem is one of at least 19 others he's facing, that are all at a level of intensity beyond the Principal threshold. If my problem couldn't be solved, he has 19 other unsolvable problems to deal with as well.

Now imagine, all of this being directed to the Superintendent of the State. The beyond-Principal level issues of 296 schools, which represent 165,000+ students, and 42,000+ employees. If not the superintendent, then I'd imagine a different position with a much larger scope of responsibility than a complex area superintendent would need to be created. Considering their responsibilities currently fall way above the national average, the complex area superintendents are already stretched thin as it is.

As a Principal of the Hawaii Department of Education, I stand opposed to this bill.

Sincerely,  
Corey Allen, Principal



Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate,

Thank you for this opportunity to share my testimony. My name is Tim Hosoda, and I am the Principal of Pauoa Elementary School. I am writing to formally express my **opposition to Senate Bill 3334**.

The only part of this bill I will be focusing on is the elimination of the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position, because it looks like rest of this bill discusses the roles and responsibilities of the Superintendent, SCC, and even principals if these positions are eliminated

My perspective is based on my role as a principal, as well as working for the state office from 2023-2025

Working in the State Office the past couple of years, I can tell you first hand, it is not structured to absorb the day-to-day duties and responsibilities managed by a CAS. The CAS serves as a vital bridge, providing support to our schools in numerous ways. I'll just share a few with you today:

**Institutional Knowledge:** they maintain a deep understanding of the unique needs and cultures of the specific schools they oversee. They come out to our schools on a regular basis and see what's going on and provide us with any necessary support we may need - funding, personnel, professional development.

**Instructional Leader:** our CAS provides localized initiatives, such as the EL Success Plan, which are essential for the high-density English Learner populations in the Honolulu District.

**Responsive Leadership:** which principals frequently require for urgent guidance. My CAS provides accessibility that would be impossible at the State level. For example, I had to reach out to my CAS on a Friday evening regarding an urgent financial matter, in which she immediately responded. And she followed up with me at 6:00 AM on Monday and this was just last week. Her quick actions directly supported our school, which allowed us to pursue professional development for our teachers.

**Crisis Management:** During COVID, at a time when everything was chaotic, our CASs were helping us through the darkest times providing support, guidance, and answering all the tough questions. In fact, in Jan 2021, the school I was at was only 1 of a handful of schools having all students back for in person learning. It was overwhelming to say the least. CAS Dilwith came to our school and was taking temperatures and intake screening to ensure we provided a safe learning environment. More recently, she secured necessary support for a student at our school in emotional distress. CAS's

rapid response was not just efficient; it was very critical in helping a family that needed us during their most challenging time. Fortunately, the student is in a much better emotional state because of the support authorized by our CAS.

The CAS role is a critical pillar of support that ensures our schools remain safe, responsive, and instructionally sound. Eliminating this position would dismantle a system of accountability and support that took years to build. I respectfully ask that you **oppose SB 3334** to ensure the continued stability of the Hawaii Department of Education.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 9:20:52 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jennifer Ichiyama	Individual	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate,

My name is Jennifer Ichiyama-Bangan, and I am the TA Principal of Ali’iolani Elementary School. I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 3334.

While I value shared decision-making and community engagement, SB3334 proposes changes that would significantly and negatively impact effective school leadership, operational stability, and instructional continuity. Specifically, I am concerned about (1) the elimination of CAS positions and (2) proposed changes to principal evaluation and hiring procedures requiring School Community Council (SCC) involvement.

**1. Elimination of CAS Positions**

Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) play a critical and irreplaceable role in Hawai’i’s uniquely centralized school system. CAS serves as the essential link between schools and the state-level DOE, providing instructional leadership, compliance guidance, and timely decision-making support.

Eliminating CAS positions would:

1. Remove a vital layer of instructional and operational leadership support for principals.
2. Increase fragmentation and inconsistencies across schools and complex areas.
3. Shift additional responsibilities to principals without corresponding capacity or authority.
4. Undermine systemwide coherence in implementation of state and federal mandates.

From a principal’s perspective, CAS are not redundant—they are essential partners in school improvement, crisis response, personnel guidance, and accountability. Their removal would weaken—not strengthen—school leadership and student support structures.

**2. Changes to Principal Evaluation and Hiring Procedures**

SB3334’s proposal to require School Community Council (SCC) involvement in principal evaluation and hiring raises serious concerns related to governance, objectivity, confidentiality, and equity.

While SCCs play an important advisory role, expanding their authority into evaluation and hiring functions would:

- Compromising the professional integrity and confidentiality of personnel processes.
- Introduce inconsistencies across schools due to varying SCC capacity, training, and composition.
- Risk politicizing leadership decisions rather than grounding them in instructional leadership expertise.
- Blur accountability lines within a centralized statewide system.

Principals are evaluated and hired within a framework that balances instructional leadership, compliance, labor agreements, and systemwide priorities. These processes require trained evaluators with a comprehensive understanding of educational leadership standards, legal requirements, and DOE expectations. SCCs are not designed, trained, or resourced for this role.

## **Conclusion**

SB3334, though well-intended, would have unintended and harmful consequences for school leadership, system coherence, and ultimately student learning. The elimination of CAS positions and the restructuring of principal evaluation and hiring processes would weaken leadership pipelines and destabilize schools—particularly those serving high-need communities.

I respectfully urge the Senate to reject SB3334 and instead engage principals, CAS, educators, and community stakeholders in thoughtful dialogue to strengthen—not dismantle—effective leadership structures within the Hawai‘i State Department of Education.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony and for your continued commitment to Hawai‘i’s students and public schools.

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 1:01:17 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joseph Passantino	Individual	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Joseph Passantino, and I stand before you today not just as a principal, but as an educator who has dedicated over twenty years of my life to Hawai‘i’s public schools — as a teacher, a vice principal, and now a principal.

I am here to speak strongly — and personally — in opposition to Senate Bill 3334.

Every single day in our schools is a challenge.

Some days it’s a child in crisis.

Some days it’s a parent who is hurting and frustrated.

Some days it’s staffing shortages, safety concerns, or serious instructional needs.

And many days — it’s all of those at once.

Through every one of those moments, my Complex Area Superintendent has been my lifeline.

She is not just an administrator.

She is my direct support, my coach, my problem-solver, and the person I turn to when decisions are heavy and the stakes are high.

Our CAS oversees 29 schools, yet she still answers my calls, responds to my emails, and shows up when schools need help. I reach out to her daily, sometimes multiple times a week , because the reality is: principals cannot do this work alone.

When a crisis happens, I don’t have time to wait through layers of bureaucracy.

I need leadership.

I need guidance.

I need someone who understands schools and stands with us.

And that is exactly what the CAS does.

So when I hear a proposal to eliminate this position, my honest question is simple:

**What is the plan to support principals like me when this lifeline is gone?**

Who will help when a student is in danger?

Who will step in when a parent situation escalates?

Who will guide us through legal, staffing, and instructional challenges that happen every single day?

Because eliminating the CAS does not eliminate the problems in our schools.

It only eliminates the support.

After twenty years in education, I can tell you with certainty, this job is harder than it has ever been. Our students have greater needs. Our families are under more stress. Our staff are exhausted and doing their best to hold it together.

The CAS is the glue that holds leadership together across schools.

Taking that away will not save schools.

It will destabilize them.

It will increase principal burnout.

It will increase turnover.

And ultimately, it will hurt the very students we are all here to serve.

I love my school.

I love my students.

I love this profession.

Most importantly, I want to share that Public Schools are Not Failing.

We were a CSI school, we had single digit proficiency scores and we have brought those scores up and we are doing better.

Every school has challenges, we are not perfect, but there is a lot of positive things going on.

There are so many stories of success. I wish this committee would focus on that and support the efforts of our public school system and acknowledge the work we do in the field. Acknowledge the support from the complex and state as we need all hands on deck to support the school level.

We could not do this work, and do it well, without the direct leadership and support of our Complex Area Superintendent.

I respectfully urge you to oppose Senate Bill 3334.

Please do not remove one of the most critical support systems our schools have.

Our principals need support.  
Our schools need stability.  
And our students deserve strong leadership at every level.

**Date:** Friday, February 13, 2026

**Time:** 1:05 pm

**Committee:** EDN

**Department:** Education

**BILL:** SB 3334, Relating to Education Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**Testifier:** Bruce Naguwa

**Position:** Opposition and Comments

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

My name is Bruce Naguwa. Having served the Department of Education as both a Principal and a Deputy District Superintendent for the Leeward District, I am writing to express my opposition to SB 3334. While consolidation may appear efficient on paper, it threatens to dismantle the localized support systems that our schools and students rely on for implementation of Federal, State and Local initiatives to improve student achievement.

In my experience overseeing the Leeward District, our office was responsible for six distinct complex areas: Waianae, Nanakuli, Kapolei, Campbell, Waipahu, and Pearl City. A "one-size-fits-all" district model ignores a fundamental reality: Hawaii's schools are unique to the population they serve.

- **Diverse Needs:** The challenges facing a school in Pearl City are vastly different from those in Waianae.
- **Responsiveness:** The current Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) model ensures that leadership is close to the classroom. When a school faces a crisis, whether it involves facilities, personnel, or community relations, a CAS can respond with a level of speed and nuance that a centralized District Superintendent simply cannot.
- **Tailored Initiatives:** Under the CAS model, resources and curriculum supports are tailored to the specific demographic and geographic needs of the complex. Reverting to a seven-district model would create a bureaucratic distance that leaves individual school needs overlooked and underserved.

I also wish to voice my serious concerns regarding the proposal to weight School Community Council (SCC) evaluations at 50% for principal selection.

While community input is a vital component of a healthy school, a 50% weight is disproportionate and dangerous. Principal selection must remain a merit-based process centered on instructional leadership and professional expertise. High-stakes hiring decisions should not be vulnerable to the personal agendas or "popularity contests" of a few individuals who may not represent the broader stakeholder consensus. We must ensure our leaders are chosen for their ability to move a school forward, not their alignment with a specific agenda.

The strength of our education system lies in its ability to see and support every student. Replacing the regional leadership of CAS positions with a distant district model is a step backward for equity, access and efficiency.

I urge the Committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain a structure that provides our schools with the individual attention and professional leadership they deserve.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

**Bruce Naguwa**

Former Principal & Deputy District Superintendent

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 8:24:34 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sonja Samsonas	Individual	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

**My name is Sonja Samsonas, and I am the Principal of Kauluwela Elementary School. I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 3334.**

**While I value shared decision-making and community engagement, SB3334 proposes changes that would significantly and negatively impact effective school leadership, operational stability, and instructional continuity. Specifically, I am concerned about (1) the elimination of CAS positions and (2) proposed changes to principal evaluation and hiring procedures requiring School Community Council (SCC) involvement.**

**1. Elimination of CAS Positions**

**Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) play a critical and irreplaceable role in Hawai‘i’s uniquely centralized school system. CAS serve as the essential link between schools and the state-level DOE, providing instructional leadership, compliance guidance, and timely decision-making support.**

**Eliminating CAS positions would:**

- 1. Remove a vital layer of instructional and operational leadership support for principals.**
- 2. Increase fragmentation and inconsistencies across schools and complex areas.**
- 3. Shift additional responsibilities to principals without corresponding capacity or authority.**
- 4. Undermine systemwide coherence in implementation of state and federal mandates.**

**From a principal’s perspective, CAS are not redundant—they are essential partners in school improvement, crisis response, personnel guidance, and accountability. Their removal would weaken—not strengthen—school leadership and student support structures.**

**2. Changes to Principal Evaluation and Hiring Procedures**

**SB3334’s proposal to require School Community Council (SCC) involvement in principal evaluation and hiring raises serious concerns related to governance, objectivity, confidentiality, and equity.**

**While SCCs play an important advisory role, expanding their authority into evaluation and hiring functions would:**

- **Compromise the professional integrity and confidentiality of personnel processes.**
- **Introduce inconsistencies across schools due to varying SCC capacity, training, and composition.**
- **Risk politicizing leadership decisions rather than grounding them in instructional leadership expertise.**
- **Blur accountability lines within a centralized statewide system.**

**Principals are evaluated and hired within a framework that balances instructional leadership, compliance, labor agreements, and systemwide priorities. These processes require trained evaluators with a comprehensive understanding of educational leadership standards, legal requirements, and DOE expectations. SCCs are not designed, trained, or resourced for this role.**

## **Conclusion**

**SB3334, though well-intended, would have unintended and harmful consequences for school leadership, system coherence, and ultimately student learning. The elimination of CAS positions and the restructuring of principal evaluation and hiring processes would weaken leadership pipelines and destabilize schools—particularly those serving high-need communities.**

**I respectfully urge the Senate to reject SB3334 and instead engage principals, CAS, educators, and community stakeholders in thoughtful dialogue to strengthen—not dismantle—effective leadership structures within the Hawai‘i State Department of Education.**

**Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony and for your continued commitment to Hawai‘i’s students and public schools.**

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

**DATE:** Friday, February 13, 2026

**TIME:** 1:05PM

**LOCATION:** Conference Room CR 229 & Videoconference



**Committee:** EDN

**BILL:** **SB 3334, Relating to Education** Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**TESTIFIER(S):** **Adria Medeiros, Principal Mountain View Elementary School**

**POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 3334, which proposes eliminating Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) positions and shifting principal evaluation input responsibilities to School Community Councils. As a school principal in the Hawai‘i State Department of Education, I am deeply concerned about the unintended consequences this legislation could have on leadership stability, operational effectiveness, and student outcomes across our public schools.

SB3334 seeks to remove the Complex Area Superintendent role as part of an effort to streamline administrative structures and revisit leadership systems established under Act 51. However, this proposal does not fully account for how CAS leadership functions in practice. The CAS structure is not administrative redundancy; it is a critical layer that helps schools operate effectively within a complex and demanding educational environment. My CAS serves as my direct supervisor, but more importantly as a strategic leadership partner who provides guidance in moments of crisis, helps navigate complex conflicts, supports operational decision-making, and ensures alignment between state priorities and school-level implementation. Removing this position would not increase efficiency; it would weaken the leadership infrastructure that directly supports student outcomes and school stability.

From a daily operational perspective, the absence of CAS leadership would introduce significant fragmentation. Principals would lose immediate access to experienced decision-making support during emergencies, personnel conflicts, compliance challenges, and fiscal planning cycles. Coordination between schools would weaken, professional learning systems would lose coherence, and escalation pathways for urgent issues to State level leadership would become unclear or delayed. This would not streamline leadership; it would decentralize responsibility without providing replacement capacity, increasing risk exposure for schools and the students we serve. In a State that functions as one school district, this poses a significant threat to student success.

Under the leadership of the CAS, our Complex Area teams also provide indispensable support in areas that directly affect student outcomes, including professional development, curricular implementation, and student support. These services cannot easily be replicated at the school level and cannot simply be absorbed by already overextended staff. Eliminating this support would shift systemic burdens

downward onto campuses, reducing our ability to focus on teaching and learning - the very outcome this system exists to protect.

I am equally concerned about the proposal within SB3334 that places principal evaluation input in the hands of School Community Councils (SCCs). SCCs serve an important advisory and engagement role, and their partnership is valued. However, evaluating professional leadership performance requires deep contextual understanding of instructional systems, personnel management, legal obligations, and operational complexity. While SCC members provide valuable community perspective, most do not have sustained exposure to the full scope of leadership responsibilities or training in leadership evaluation standards. Assigning evaluative authority in this manner risks undermining the fairness, rigor, and professional integrity of principal assessment.

Principal evaluation should remain the responsibility of trained educational supervisors who possess the expertise, sustained interaction, and system-level perspective necessary to assess leadership performance comprehensively. The current structure allows for meaningful feedback, professional growth, and accountability aligned to established leadership standards. Altering this structure weakens those safeguards.

I offer these concerns not only from a professional standpoint, but from lived experience shaped by a long-standing professional relationship within this system. I have been mentored by my current Complex Area Superintendent since I was a first-year teacher, when she served as my complex area Resource Teacher. She later became the Vice Principal at my school, a role I eventually assumed under her continued mentorship when she moved on, and she now serves as my Complex Area Superintendent. This progression reflects the intentional leadership development and continuity that the CAS structure makes possible. Over the years, she has provided guidance, support, and helped me grow from classroom educator to school leader. This continuity reflects not only individual mentorship, but the leadership development pipeline that prepares and sustains qualified school leaders across the state. That depth of institutional knowledge, trust, and professional understanding cannot be replicated through fragmented supervisory structures at the state level. Removing this layer of leadership would not only disrupt operational support - it would dismantle mentorship pathways and leadership cultivation that sustain strong schools across our system.

Policies intended to improve efficiency must be grounded in operational reality and in their impact on student learning environments statewide. SB3334 risks destabilizing leadership systems that currently enable schools to respond effectively to student needs, community expectations, and state accountability requirements. I respectfully urge the Legislature to reconsider advancing SB3334 and to engage directly with practicing school leaders before making structural changes of this magnitude.

Mahalo for your time and for your continued commitment to the students and communities we serve.



Adria Medeiros

Principal, Mountain View Elementary School



## 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 13, 2026

### S.B. 3334 — RELATING TO EDUCATION

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO opposes S.B. 3334, which repeals the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position and clarifies that School Community Councils (SCCs) shall submit principal evaluations to the Superintendent of Education, who shall have final authority to appoint a principal. It also requires the Department of Education to adopt rules.

We are perplexed by this proposal, which claims to “revisit” Act 51 (Session Laws of Hawaii 2004) due to concerns about the implementation and effectiveness of structures it created. One of the most significant and intentional outcomes of Act 51 was the creation of the complex area system and the hiring of CASs. Prior to Act 51’s decentralization reforms, the DOE operated under a District Superintendent model in which each superintendent oversaw three times as many schools as a CAS currently supports. The excessive span of control made it extremely difficult for District Superintendents to provide principals with the direct, timely instructional leadership and operational support needed at the school level. The CAS structure fixed this long-standing problem and remains essential to the functioning of the tri-level system in place today.

With respect to SCCs, there is already a well-established process for SCCs to provide feedback on their principal’s performance. In addition, the formal evaluation of a school principal is conducted through the Comprehensive Evaluation System for School Administrators (CESSA), which is governed through a negotiated Memorandum of Understanding between the Department and HGEA. The procedures governing principal selection are also contractual provisions collaboratively developed between the employer and the union. SB3334 would disrupt these negotiated systems and may conflict with collectively bargained agreements.

It is also important to recognize that implementation of Act 51 remains a work in progress, and meaningful improvements continue to occur. A recent example is the

long-awaited conversion of vice principals from 10-month to 12-month employees—an explicit commitment of Act 51 that finally came to fruition only two years ago with the support of the Governor and Superintendent. This was a 20-year “IOU,” now fulfilled, demonstrating that the system continues to mature and align with Act 51’s original goals.

HGEA firmly believes that the issues SB 3334 attempts to address have already shown measurable improvement. Repealing the CAS structure and altering principal selection and evaluation authority would not strengthen the public school system—it would reverse decades of progress, destabilize supports for principals, and create new uncertainty for schools and communities. Rather than dismantling foundational components of Act 51, Hawaii should continue to refine and improve the systems that are working and maintain the collaborative processes that guide principal evaluation and selection today.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on S.B. 3334.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randy Perreira". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Randy Perreira  
Executive Director

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 11:27:16 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lynn Romero	Testifying for Department of Education	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Date: Friday February 13, 2026**

**Time: 1:05pm**

**Location: Conference Room CR 229 & Videoconference**

**Committee: EDN**

**Department:**

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education: Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions**

**TESTIFIER(S): Lynn Romero, IDEA DES**

**POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

**We are writing to express our opposition to SB 3334. As the District Educational Specialists overseeing Special Education, School-based behavioral Health, and the Autism Program in the Leeward District, we are deeply concerned that the elimination of the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) will dismantle the vital support systems for our most vulnerable students.**

**While the bill's stated intent is to "reduce administrative burdens," it fails to account for the specialized regional leadership that ensures the delivery of a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students with disabilities.**

## **1. Breakdown of Essential Support Teams**

**The CAS does not operate in isolation; they lead a Complex Area Support Team that works directly with schools in support of critical areas such as school improvement, instruction, curriculum, professional development, induction and mentoring, CTE, special education, and a myriad of other areas. Eliminating the CAS position deprives these teams of leadership, leaving schools without cohesive support.**

## **2. Risk to IDEA Compliance and Student Advocacy**

**For students with disabilities and their families, the District Educational Specialists work in direct alignment with the CAS to manage:**

- IDEA Compliance: Ensuring federal mandates are met at the school level.**
- Educational Programming & Funding: Securing and allocating resources for specialized needs.**
- Written Complaints and Due Process Complaints: Resolving legal and procedural conflicts locally and efficiently.**

**Without a CAS to provide regional oversight, the fidelity of FAPE implementation is at significant risk. The "middle-management link" provided by the CAS ensures that state-level initiatives are translated into effective classroom support.**

## **3. Expansion of "Honolulu-Centric" Governance**

**Removing complex area leadership threatens to centralize power entirely in Honolulu. In complex areas like Nānākuli-Wai'ana, a centralized structure fails to address our unique geographic and socio-economic challenges. We risk creating a system that lacks accountability, connection, and cultural responsiveness as it relates to all the specific communities and families we serve.**

**The loss of the CAS would result in a massive void of support for schools, students with disabilities, and their families. We urge the Committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain the complex-area leadership structure essential to student success.**

**Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.**

**Respectfully,**

**Lynn Romero**

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:35:27 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cheryl Chock	Testifying for Hawaii Department of Education	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing to express strong opposition to the proposed legislation that would eliminate the role of complex area superintendents (CAS) and significantly alter established leadership structures within the Hawaii State Department of Education (HIDOE). As a Complex Area Educational Officer, I work closely with our CAS to coordinate academic, operational, and student supports across multiple schools, and I have seen firsthand how essential this role is to effective system functioning.

HIDOE’s tri-level structure—state, complex area, and school—was intentionally designed through Act 51 to create clear lines of responsibility while ensuring schools receive responsive, context-specific leadership. The CAS serves as the central point of coordination for implementing the Board of Education’s Strategic Plan, guiding Academic and Financial Plan (AFP) development, and maintaining accountability under HRS §302A-1004. This structure ensures alignment across teams and consistency in supporting school improvement and compliance efforts.

In daily practice, CAS provide critical oversight in multi-tiered systems of support, special education compliance, professional learning, school improvement planning, and crisis response. Their leadership ensures timely decision-making, aligned resources, and coordinated services tailored to each school community. Eliminating this role would fragment communication, create gaps in accountability, and place additional strain on principals and staff.

The proposed shift to undefined “appropriate authority” structures raises significant concerns about consistency, clarity, and effective leadership. Removing CAS without a clearly defined alternative risks weakening principal development, disrupting system alignment, and undermining efforts to improve student achievement, safety, and well-being.

I respectfully urge you to oppose this legislation and instead engage educators and complex area leaders in collaborative efforts to strengthen HIDOE’s existing framework.

Respectfully,

Cheryl Chock

School Renewal Specialist

Kaimuki-McKinley-Roosevelt Complex Area

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate,

My name is **Ervin Pasalo**, and I am the Principal of **Hokulani Elementary School**. I respectfully submit this testimony **in opposition to Senate Bill 3334**. While community involvement is important, I believe this bill creates several problems for Hawaii's schools.

---

## 1. Keeping Complex Area Superintendents (CAS)

I argue that getting rid of CAS positions would be a mistake because:

- **Essential Support:** CAS serve as the vital link between individual schools and the state Department of Education.
- **Increased Workload:** Removing them would force principals to take on extra duties without extra help or authority.
- **System Confusion:** Without CAS leadership, schools across the state would become more disconnected and inconsistent.
- **Crucial Partnership:** Principals rely on CAS for help with crises, staff guidance, and school improvements.

## 2. Principal Hiring and Evaluations

The bill suggests letting School Community Councils (SCC) help hire and evaluate principals, which raises several concerns:

- **Privacy Risks:** Evaluation and hiring are confidential personnel matters that should remain professional.
  - **Lack of Training:** SCC members are not trained or resourced to handle complex legal and educational leadership standards.
  - **Fairness Issues:** This change could make leadership decisions more about local politics than about who is the best educator for the job.
- 

## Conclusion

I believe SB 3334 would weaken the leadership of Hawaii's schools, especially in high-need areas. I ask the Senate to **reject the bill** and instead talk with educators to find better ways to support the school system.

Aloha Chair Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Michelle Kidani, and Members of the Education Committee,

My name is Leonard Padayhag, and I serve as a School Renewal Specialist (SRS) in the Kaimuki-McKinley-Roosevelt Complex Area. I submit this testimony in strong opposition to Senate Bill 3334, which proposes to eliminate the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position.

From my role at the district level, I witness firsthand the immense scope and complexity of work required to support our schools. This includes coordinating statewide initiatives, providing direct campus support, addressing concerns from schools and families, and ensuring alignment between school and district priorities. The CAS serves as the chief administrative officer within each complex area, providing critical instructional, operational, and fiscal leadership. Eliminating this position would leave district staff and school leaders without a clearly designated local leader to guide and coordinate these efforts.

SB 3334 would create unclear and fragmented authority structures. Rather than maintaining a dedicated regional leader who understands the unique needs of each complex area, the bill replaces the CAS with a vaguely defined “appropriate authority” or “administrative framework.” This change risks isolating schools, weakening communication, and placing additional strain on our school leaders that are constantly facing increasingly complex and demanding responsibilities.

Additionally, this bill would negatively impact families and communities. The CAS currently serves as the first level of appeal for parent concerns, including disputes and student disciplinary matters. Removing this local point of contact and redirecting families to a centralized authority will slow response times, making it more difficult for families to resolve issues in a timely and meaningful way.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to reject SB 3334. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this topic.

Mahalo,

Leonard Padayhag  
School Renewal Specialist, Educational Officer  
Kaimuki-McKinley-Roosevelt Complex Area  
4967 Kilauea Avenue  
Honolulu, HI 96816

**Date:** Friday February 13, 2026  
**Time:** 1:05pm  
**Location:** Conference Room CR 229 &  
Videoconference  
**Committee:** EDN

**Department:** Leeward District, Department of Education

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education:** Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**TESTIFIER(S):** Leeward District District Educational Specialists:

Alison Cameron & Jody Agpalsa, Pearl City/Waipahu

Susan Shinkawa, Campbell/Kapolei

Marie Burghardt & Wingkan Hui, Nanakuli/Waianae

Skylar Tokumine, Leeward District

## **POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

We are writing to express our opposition to SB 3334. As the District Educational Specialists overseeing Special Education, School-based behavioral Health, and the Autism Program in the Leeward District, we are deeply concerned that the elimination of the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) will dismantle the vital support systems for our most vulnerable students.

While the bill's stated intent is to "reduce administrative burdens," it fails to account for the specialized regional leadership that ensures the delivery of a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students with disabilities.

### **1. Breakdown of Essential Support Teams**

The CAS does not operate in isolation; they lead a Complex Area Support Team that works directly with schools in support of critical areas such as school improvement, instruction, curriculum, professional development, induction and mentoring, CTE, special education, and a myriad of other areas. Eliminating the CAS position deprives these teams of leadership, leaving schools without cohesive support.

## **2. Risk to IDEA Compliance and Student Advocacy**

For students with disabilities and their families, the District Educational Specialists work in direct alignment with the CAS to manage:

- **IDEA Compliance:** Ensuring federal mandates are met at the school level.
- **Educational Programming & Funding:** Securing and allocating resources for specialized needs.
- **Written Complaints and Due Process Complaints:** Resolving legal and procedural conflicts locally and efficiently.

Without a CAS to provide regional oversight, the fidelity of FAPE implementation is at significant risk. The "middle-management link" provided by the CAS ensures that state-level initiatives are translated into effective classroom support.

## **3. Expansion of "Honolulu-Centric" Governance**

Removing complex area leadership threatens to centralize power entirely in Honolulu. In complex areas like Nānākuli-Wai'anae, a centralized structure fails to address our unique geographic and socio-economic challenges. We risk creating a system that lacks accountability to the specific communities and families we serve.

The loss of the CAS would result in a massive void of support for schools, students with disabilities, and their families. We urge the Committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain the complex-area leadership structure essential to student success.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

**Respectfully,**

Alison Cameron & Jody Agpalsa, Pearl City/Waipahu  
Susan Shinkawa, Campbell/Kapolei,  
Marie Burghardt & Wingkan Hui, Nanakuli/Waianae  
Skylar Tokumine, Leeward District

**Date:** Friday February 13, 2026  
**Time:** 1:05pm  
**Location:** Conference Room CR 229 &  
Videoconference  
**Committee:** EDN

**Department:** Holualoa Elementary

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education** Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**Andrea Vinson, Vice Principal**

**POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

I am writing to express our opposition to SB 3334. While I understand the intent to reduce "administrative burdens," this bill fails to recognize the essential regional leadership that Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) provide—particularly for rural and underserved communities.

My opposition is based on four critical concerns:

### **1. Erosion of the Tri-Level Leadership Framework**

The CAS is not merely an administrative layer; they are the vital conduit connecting individual school needs with state-level initiatives. Eliminating this position severs the communication link between the "schoolhouse" and the Department of Education's central leadership. Without a CAS, our schools risk becoming "islands of operation," lacking a cohesive regional strategy or a direct line of advocacy at the state level.

### **2. Request for Additional Clarity on the Replacement for CAS**

Section 17 of the bill is vague as to how CAS duties would be reassigned. If the thought was to return to district superintendents, that would greatly increase the number of schools under the supervision of a smaller number of individuals, which will lead to systemic neglect and burnout.

### **3. Improper Expansion of School Community Council (SCC) Authority**

The bill proposes giving SCC evaluations a 50% weight in principal selection. We oppose this shift for the following reasons:

- **Union Contract Conflicts:** This creates a "de facto" hiring power for SCCs that contradicts existing labor agreements.
- **Integrity of Evaluation:** This shift bypasses the professional, merit-based evaluation currently facilitated by the CAS. We are concerned that, without regional oversight, the

selection process could be easily disrupted by a small number of disgruntled individuals rather than focused on professional competence.

#### **4. Risk of "Honolulu-Centric" Governance**

Removing regional leadership altogether threatens to centralize power entirely in Honolulu. For rural complexes like Nanakuli-Waianae and for our colleagues on the Neighbor Islands, a centralized structure ignores our unique geographic, cultural, and socio-economic challenges. This bill risks creating a hyper-centralized system that lacks accountability to the specific communities it is meant to serve.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain the regional leadership structure that ensures our schools, teachers, and students receive the specialized support they require. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

*Andrea Vinson,*

Vice Principal, Hawaii School Administrator

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 4:13:02 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Theodore Mura	Testifying for Kuhio Elementary School	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the Honorable Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 3334. While the bill's stated intent is to reduce administrative burden and clarify authority, the proposed elimination of the CAS position and the restructuring of principal selection processes will have the opposite effect: it will create a leadership vacuum that distances our schools from the support they desperately need.

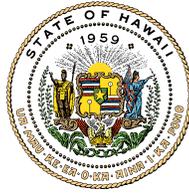
The CAS position is not an "unnecessary administrative burden"; it is a vital localized leadership hub. Hawai'i has a unique single-district system. Without the CAS, the Department of Education becomes a massive, distant bureaucracy.

CASs understand the specific socio-economic and cultural nuances of their specific complexes. They serve as a critical liaison, translating high-level state policy into actionable school-level strategies. Removing them forces 250+ individual principals to report more directly to a central office that is already overstretched.

Under current law, the CAS is the first line of appeal for school community councils and student discipline. Removing this local oversight will lead to a bottleneck of appeals at the State Superintendent's office, delaying justice for students and parents.

Efficiency is a worthy goal, but SB 3334 achieves it by sacrificing local accountability. We should be empowering our Complex Area Superintendents to better support our principals, not eliminating the bridge between our communities and the state.

I urge the committee to defer SB 3334 and instead look for ways to strengthen the CAS's ability to serve their schools.



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**ILIMA INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL**  
**KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO**  
91-884 FORT WEAVER ROAD  
EWA BEACH, HAWAII 96706

February 10, 2026

Dear Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair; and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Shayne Greenland, Principal at Ilima Intermediate School and I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to SB3334.

SB3334 conflicts with the established organizational structure and supervisory framework of the Hawai'i Department of Education (HIDOE). I strongly urge the Senate Education Committee to retain the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position as currently defined and implemented.

Under the current HIDOE job description, the Complex Area Superintendent serves as the executive instructional and administrative leader of the complex area, with responsibility for supervising and evaluating school administrators; providing instructional leadership and guidance; ensuring implementation of Board of Education policies; and monitoring compliance with state and federal laws, rules, and regulations. CASes are charged with ensuring consistent application of HIDOE priorities and expectations across schools within a complex area.

The CAS provides direct supervision, evaluation, and professional growth support to principals and is accountable for the implementation of school improvement initiatives, student achievement outcomes, fiscal integrity, personnel administration, and compliance with applicable laws, policies, and collective bargaining agreements. Central to the CAS role is the provision of timely, consistent, and responsive instructional and operational support to schools and principals. This supervisory responsibility is a core function of the position and is critical to maintaining systemwide accountability, coherence, and equity across the complex area.

Additionally, the CAS is responsible for coordinating services and resources, resolving operational and labor-related issues, and serving as the primary link between schools, the Department, and the community. This role provides principals with ongoing support,

coaching, and guidance grounded in professional expertise and system-level knowledge.

The proposal within SB3334 to designate the School Community Council (SCC) as an evaluating authority of principals is inconsistent with HIDOE's supervisory model. SCCs are advisory bodies without the statutory authority, professional training, or systemwide perspective required to evaluate administrators on instructional leadership, operational effectiveness, compliance, and labor relations. Their structure and capacity vary significantly across schools.

No other HIDOE employee group is evaluated exclusively by a volunteer advisory body. Removing professional supervisory evaluation from the CAS creates inequity, undermines labor consistency supported by HSTA and HGEA, and weakens the accountability framework outlined in HIDOE administrative roles.

Effective school leadership depends on clear lines of supervision, professional evaluation, and system alignment. SB3334 disrupts these structures by eliminating the CAS role and fragmenting principal evaluation responsibilities.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Senate Education Committee to oppose SB3334 and to preserve the Complex Area Superintendent position and supervisory responsibilities as currently defined within HIDOE.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued service to Hawai'i's public education system.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shayne Greenland', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Shayne Greenland - Principal  
Ilima Intermediate School

**Date:** Friday February 13, 2026  
**Time:** 1:05pm  
**Location:** Conference Room CR 229 &  
Videoconference  
**Committee:** EDN

**Department:** Hawaii Department of Education, Maui District

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education** Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**TESTIFIER(S):** Hāna-Lahainaluna-Lānaʻi-Molokai Complex Area Principals

### **POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

We are writing to express our opposition to SB 3334. While we understand the intent to reduce "administrative burdens," this bill fails to recognize the essential regional leadership that Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) provide—particularly for rural and underserved communities.

Our opposition is based on four critical concerns:

#### **1. Erosion of the Tri-Level Leadership Framework**

The CAS is the primary bridge between our school communities and state-level leadership. Eliminating this position doesn't just remove a layer of management; it creates a disconnect that leaves our schools isolated from the broader system. Without a CAS to translate policy into local action and advocate for our specific complex needs, we lose the cohesion that keeps our schools moving in the same direction. This disconnection will lead to inconsistent service delivery for students and the loss of a pulse on our schools that ensures state-level policies are actually grounded in the realities of our diverse communities.

#### **2. Request for Additional Clarity on the Replacement for CAS**

Section 17 of SB3334 lacks clear detail on how CAS responsibilities would be reassigned. Reverting to a district model would create an unsustainable span of control, leading to systemic oversight gaps and administrative burnout that would ultimately disadvantage our schools.

#### **3. Improper Expansion of School Community Council (SCC) Authority**

The bill proposes giving SCC evaluations a 50% weight in principal selection. We oppose this shift for the following reasons:

- **Union Contract Conflicts:** This creates a "de facto" hiring power for SCCs that contradicts existing labor agreements.
- **Integrity of Evaluation:** This shift bypasses the professional, merit-based evaluation currently facilitated by the CAS. We are concerned that, without regional oversight, the selection process could be easily disrupted by a small number of disgruntled individuals rather than focused on professional competence.

#### 4. Risk of "Oahu-Centric" Governance

Removing regional leadership altogether threatens to centralize power entirely in Oahu. For rural complexes and for our colleagues on the Neighbor Islands, a centralized structure ignores our unique geographic, cultural, and socio-economic challenges. This bill risks creating a hyper-centralized system that lacks accountability to the specific communities it is meant to serve.

For these reasons, we urge the Committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain the regional leadership structure that ensures our schools, teachers, and students receive the specialized support they require. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Hāna-Lahainaluna-Lānaʻi-Molokai Complex Area Principals

  
[Doug Boyer \(Feb 12, 2026 09:38:55 HST\)](#)  
Douglas Boyer  
Lānaʻi High & Elementary

  
[Katina M. Soares \(Feb 12, 2026 09:42:00 HST\)](#)  
Katina Soares  
Molokai High School

  
[Ian Haskins \(Feb 12, 2026 10:05:47 HST\)](#)  
Ian Haskins  
Princess Nāhi'ena'ena Elementary School

  
Kimberly Ka'ai  
Maunaloa Elementary School

  
[Michael McCloskey \(Feb 12, 2026 11:59:54 HST\)](#)  
Michael McCloskey  
King Kamehameha III Elementary School

  
[Shona Mae Pineda \(Feb 12, 2026 11:33:58 HST\)](#)  
Shona Pineda  
Kilohana Elementary School

  
[Stacy Bookland \(Feb 12, 2026 12:09:45 HST\)](#)  
Stacy Bookland  
Lahaina Intermediate School

*Richard Carosso*  
Richard Carosso  
Lahainaluna High School

*Kainoa Pali*  
[Kainoa Pali \(Feb 12, 2026 12:12:30 HST\)](#)  
Kainoa Pali  
Molokai Middle School

*Christopher Sanita*  
[Christopher Sanita \(Feb 12, 2026 12:22:59 HST\)](#)  
Christopher Sanita  
Hāna High and Elementary School

  
[Daniel Espaniola \(Feb 12, 2026 12:24:00 HST\)](#)  
Daniel Espaniola  
Kaunakakai Elementary

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 5:40:07 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
John Wataoka	Testifying for Waiʻanae Intermediate School	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Date:** Friday February 13, 2026

**Time:** 1:05pm

**Location:** Conference Room CR 229 & Videoconference

**Committee:** EDN

**Department:** Waiʻanae Intermediate School

**BILL:** SB 3334, **Relating to Education** Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**TESTIFIER:** John Wataoka, Principal of Waiʻanae Intermediate School

**POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

I am writing to express my opposition to SB 3334. While I understand the intent to reduce "administrative burdens," this bill fails to recognize the essential regional leadership that Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) provide to a community, particularly for rural and underserved communities.

My opposition is based on five critical areas of concern:

**1. Erosion of the Tri-Level Leadership Framework**

The CAS is not merely an administrative layer; they are the vital conduit connecting individual school needs with state-level initiatives. Eliminating this position severs the communication link between the school and the Department of Education’s central leadership. Without a CAS, our schools risk becoming "islands of operation," lacking a cohesive regional strategy or a direct line of advocacy at the state level.

## **2. Request for Additional Clarity on the Replacement for CAS**

Section 17 of the bill is vague as to how CAS duties would be reassigned. If the thought was to return to district superintendents, that would greatly increase the number of schools under the supervision of a smaller number of individuals, which will lead to systemic neglect and possible burnout.

## **3. Improper Expansion of School Community Council (SCC) Authority**

The bill proposes giving SCC evaluations a 50% weight in principal selection. I oppose this shift for the following reasons:

- **Union Contract Conflicts:** This creates a "de facto" hiring power for SCCs that contradicts existing labor agreements.
- **Integrity of Evaluation:** This shift bypasses the professional, merit-based evaluation currently facilitated by the CAS. We are concerned that, without regional oversight, the selection process could be easily disrupted by a small number of disgruntled individuals rather than focused on professional competence.

## **4. Risk of "Honolulu-Centric" Governance**

Removing regional leadership altogether threatens to centralize power entirely in Honolulu. For rural complexes like Nanakuli-Waianae and for our colleagues on the Neighbor Islands, a centralized structure ignores our unique geographic, cultural, and socio-economic challenges. This bill risks creating a hyper-centralized system that lacks accountability to the specific communities it is meant to serve.

## **5. Institutional Knowledge and Mentorship**

Within our current system, close to 70% of school principals are eligible to retire. With such a potential leadership drain, the CAS position holds the unique responsibility of mentoring our newer school leaders on how to be successful. No school has made improvements and progress without the support and leadership of the CAS position. Without a coherent plan on how to maintain these mentorship relationships, many school leaders will lack a mentor in their early years of leading their respective school.

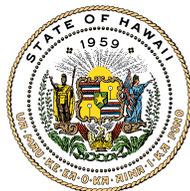
For these reasons, I urge the Committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain the regional leadership structure that ensures our schools, teachers, and students receive the specialized support they require. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

John Wataoka

Principal, Wai‘anae Intermediate School





**STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO  
THE RADFORD COMPLEX**

2/11/26

Dear Madame Chair Kim,

We, the Principals of the Radford Complex, collectively submit this testimony to express our strong opposition to SB3334. Representing a diverse group of schools - including seven elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school - serving thousands of students and families in our community, we believe this bill would significantly compromise our ability to lead our schools effectively.

SB3334 seeks to abolish the complex area superintendent (CAS) position to address "unclear authority structures" and "administrative burdens". From our perspective as school leaders on the ground, this proposal fails to account for the staggering scale of the Hawaii Department of Education. While the average school district in the United States serves roughly 5,000 students, a single Hawaii complex area typically oversees at least 1,900 employees, 10,000 students, and 19,000 parents.

Our collective concerns regarding the repeal of the CAS position include:

- **Unreasonable Scope of Responsibility:** This bill would redirect large scale issues above the authority of Principal from 296 schools—representing over 165,000 students and 42,000 employees—directly to the State Superintendent. It is physically and administratively impossible for a single office to manage the nuanced, high-intensity problems of nearly 300 schools effectively.
- **Loss of Local Leadership:** The CAS serves as a vital intermediary, overseeing essential functions such as personnel, fiscal support, curriculum development, and special education programs within our specific complex areas. Removing this layer of leadership would leave us without the localized support necessary to navigate complex state and federal compliance.
- **Over Centralized/Decentralized Principal Selection:** SB3334 proposes giving the State Superintendent final authority over all principal appointments. We believe that removing the CAS from this process—who has the most balanced knowledge of our schools' specific needs—will lead to a "one-size-fits-all" approach that ignores the unique culture of the Radford Complex. On the other side of this, the school community council authority structure is even more unclear than the authority of the CAS, which would lead

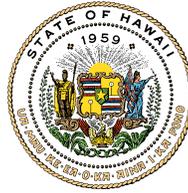
to a contrary effect that the bill seeks.

- Strained Military Community Support: As the Radford Complex serves a significant military population, we are particularly concerned by the bill's proposal to replace CAS representation on the State Council on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. The CAS provides a consistent, high-level administrative voice that is essential for facilitating the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.

We recognize that the legislature wishes to streamline accountability. However, our Complex Area Superintendents are already stretched thin, managing responsibilities that far exceed national averages. Removing them will not decrease administrative burden; it will create larger administrative issues mostly in the form of a bottleneck at the state level that will ultimately harm our students and community.

As the unified leadership of the Radford Complex, we stand opposed to SB3334.

Sincerely,  
The Principals of the Radford Complex



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
CAMPBELL - KAPOLEI COMPLEX AREA

**TO:** Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair, Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

**DATE:** February 13, 2026

**TIME:** 1:05pm

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education; Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions**

**TESTIFIER(S):** The Principals of the Campbell-Kapolei Complex Area

**POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

We, the Principals of the Campbell-Kapolei Complex Area, write to express our strong opposition to SB 3334. While we appreciate the Committee's focus on streamlining operations, this bill fundamentally misinterprets the role of the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS). In a region as large and rapidly growing as ours, the CAS is not an administrative hurdle; they are the essential strategic anchor that ensures our schools operate with a unified vision and the necessary regional resources.

Our opposition is based on the following critical concerns regarding the impact on our students, staff, and community:

**1. Disruption of the Essential Leadership Pipeline**

The CAS serves as the vital link between school level and the Department of Education's central leadership. This role ensures that state-level initiatives are translated into actionable, culturally relevant strategies for our specific campuses. Without this bridge:

- **Continuity is Broken:** We lose the regional oversight that ensures a smooth educational transition for students moving from our elementary schools to our intermediate and high schools.
- **Support is Diluted:** Decision-making moves further away from the classroom, shifting from a leader who is physically present on our campuses to a centralized office that lacks proximity to our daily challenges.

## 2. Operational Risk and Administrative Burnout (Section 17)

SB 3334 lacks clarity regarding the reassignment of CAS duties. If these responsibilities are consolidated into a broader "District" model, the span of control for a single individual would increase to an unmanageable level. For a complex as large as Campbell-Kapolei, this would inevitably lead to systemic neglect and executive burnout, as one leader cannot effectively oversee the professional development and operational needs of dozens of diverse schools.

## 3. Compromising the Integrity of Principal Selection

We strongly oppose the proposal to give School Community Council (SCC) evaluations a 50% weight in principal selection:

- **Professional Standards:** This shift bypasses the professional, merit-based, and objective evaluation currently facilitated by the CAS.
- **Vulnerability to Influence:** Without regional oversight, the selection process risks being disrupted by small, vocal groups rather than being grounded in the long-term professional competence required to lead a school.
- **Contractual Conflicts:** This proposal likely conflicts with existing collective bargaining agreements regarding hiring and evaluation protocols.

## 4. Strategic Management of a High-Growth Region

The Campbell-Kapolei complex serves one of the most dynamic student populations in the state. Our CAS provides the high-level coordination required to manage the constant infrastructure demands and staffing shifts unique to the Campbell - Kapolei Complex Area. Eliminating this position would leave our individual schools to manage these regional complexities in isolation, losing the unified voice that currently advocates for our specific geographic and socio-economic needs at the state level.

## 5. The Threat of Hyper-Centralized Governance

The complex area model was designed to decentralize power and bring the Department closer to the communities it serves. SB 3334 moves in the opposite direction, threatening to centralize all authority in Honolulu. For the families of Ewa and Kapolei, a "one-size-fits-all" approach from a central office cannot replace the responsive, field-based leadership that a CAS provides.

## Conclusion

The Campbell-Kapolei complex requires dedicated, regional leadership to navigate the unique challenges of our community. SB 3334 would dismantle the very structure that provides our schools with stability, advocacy, and a direct line to state-level support.

For these reasons, **we urge the Committee to hold SB 3334.**

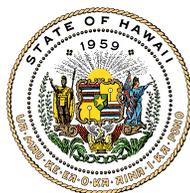
Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

Campbell-Kapolei Complex Area Principals

Anela Pia, Principal, Ka'imiloa Elementary School  
Christopher D Bonilla, Principal, Holomua Elementary School  
Traci Dolim, Principal, Pohakea Elementary School  
Mel Habon, Principal, Iroquois Point Elementary School  
Jay Lin, Principal, Ewa Beach Elementary School  
Paul Taga, Principal, Keone'ula Elementary School  
Stan Tamashiro, Principal, Ewa Elementary School  
Corey Barton, Principal, Ewa Makai Middle School  
Shayne Greenland, Principal, Ilima Intermediate School  
April Hosino, Principal, James Campbell High School

Neil Battad, Principal, Mauka Lani Elementary School  
Danielle Himalaya, Principal, Makakilo Elementary School  
Aaron Okumura, Principal, Barbers Point Elementary School  
Cindy Otsu, Principal, Kapolei Elementary School  
Bryan Rankie, Principal, Ho'okele Elementary School  
Daryl Agena, Principal, Kapolei Middle School  
Todd Fujimori, Principal Honouliuli Middle School  
Wesley Shinkawa, Principal, Kapolei High School



**STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
CAMPBELL - KAPOLEI COMPLEX AREA**

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

**DATE:** February 13, 2026

**TIME:** 1:05 PM

**LOCATION:** Conference Room 229 & Videoconference, State Capitol, 415 South Beretania Street

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education** | Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) Positions

**TESTIFIER:** Susan Shinkawa, Ed.D., LMHC, District Educational Specialist, Campbell-Kapolei

**POSITION:** OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS

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

As a District Educational Specialist (DES) directly managing Special Education (SPED) and School-Based Behavioral Health (SBBH) in the Campbell-Kapolei complex area, I strongly oppose SB 3334. This bill threatens the stability of specialized student services by removing the critical leadership layer that bridges state mandates with school-level execution. The primary intent of SB 3334 is to "reduce administrative burdens", but in the context of SPED and SBBH, it does the exact opposite. It removes the only leadership role capable of closing the immense gap between State Office mandates and school-level realities.

- The State vs. School Disconnect: The State Office operates at a high level—focused on statewide compliance, legislative reporting, and broad policy. Conversely, our schools are on the ground, dealing with the immediate, complex needs of students. The CAS is the vital bridge that connects these two worlds. Without this bridge, the connection is severed.
- Major Disruptions to SPED and SBBH services: In my role as a DES, I see daily how the CAS facilitates services that the State Office is too far removed to handle:
  - Resource Allocation: When a school in Campbell-Kapolei experiences a sudden influx of high-need students, the CAS has the authority to move resources across the complex area immediately. The State Office moves too slowly for these "on-the-ground" emergencies.

- Crisis Management: In behavioral health, timing is everything. The CAS can approve emergency interventions and provide immediate support. Removing CAS creates an administrative "black hole" in which schools must wait for a distant state official to make decisions.
- Islands of Operation and Legal Risk: Without the CAS, schools will be forced to operate as "islands". This is particularly dangerous for Special Education. If every school interprets state SPED policy differently due to the lack of area-wide oversight, the Department will face increased legal challenges and IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) violations. The CAS ensures consistency across the complexes, protecting both students and the Department.
- Loss of Advocacy: The Campbell-Kapolei community has unique socio-economic and geographic needs and continues to grow. The CAS understands these nuances. If leadership is centralized back to the State Office, our students' specific needs will be lost in a "one-size-fits-all" state approach. We cannot expect a state-level staff to understand the specific behavioral health and special education landscape of Campbell-Kapolei classrooms as well as a CAS does.

The gap between the State Office and schools is too wide to be left unbridged. Eliminating the CAS doesn't streamline the system; it decapitates the chain of command and leaves our most vulnerable students without proximate, accountable leadership at the moment they need it most. I urge the Committee to vote NO on SB 3334.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**Respectfully submitted,**



Susan Shinkawa (Feb 10, 2026 23:54:11 HST)

Susan Shinkawa, Ed.D., LMHC  
District Educational Specialist  
Campbell-Kapolei Complex Area  
Hawai'i Department of Education

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ON SB 3334

Submitted on behalf of Fern Elementary School by Principal Glen Miyasato

February 11, 2026

Aloha Honorable Senators of the Education Committee:

Your ongoing support of our public schools is greatly appreciated. I am very concerned about SB 3334 which would eliminate the complex area superintendent (CAS) position in the D.O.E. system. Please do not pass this bill.

Now in my 47th year serving the keiki of Hawai`i's public schools, I have an understanding of effective responsiveness and leadership for our schools. School principals like myself have the "on the ground" key role of not only keeping our students and staff safe but to ensure that each student achieves to the highest potential. The complex area superintendent (CAS) is essential to helping principals achieve these two "must dos" in the following ways:

- Being the only reliable, timely, and direct link to State resources and guidance during campus emergencies. Principals can always rely on the CAS's immediate answer to an emergency cell phone call.
- Doing regular walkthroughs of our school's classrooms to give honest and supportive feedback from complex and statewide perspectives on our school's progress.
- Taking the time to do deep data analysis of school data and combining that with observations from the regular walkthroughs to give the principal and school honest and supportive feedback for continuous improvement.
- Being the essential direct line of communication and school-level input from the 258 schools to the Superintendent.
- Being the reliably available guide and thought partner to principals during their most stressful times.

Please do not eliminate our most trusted and reliable communication link to the BOE and State DOE leaders.

Mahalo.

## **TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SB 3334**

**TO:** The Senate Committee on Education

**FROM:** Bryan Gusman, Principal, Noelani Elementary School

**DATE:** 2/11/26

**SUBJECT:** Strong Opposition to SB 3334 (Relating to Department of Education Administration)

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

I am writing to express my **strong opposition to SB 3334**. While I understand the bill's stated intent is to reduce administrative burden and clarify authority, the proposed elimination of the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position and the restructuring of principal selection processes will have the opposite effect. It will create a leadership vacuum that distances our schools from the support they desperately need.

Hawaii's unique single-district system requires specialized local management. The CAS is not an "unnecessary administrative burden"; it is a vital hub that keeps the Department of Education from becoming even more of a bureaucracy.

To that point, the CASs understand the specific socio-economic and cultural nuances of their specific complexes. They serve as a critical liaison, translating state policy into actionable school-level strategies. Removing them forces over 250 individual principals to report directly to a central office that is already overstretched, removing a vital layer of instructional leadership support.

Under the current structure, the CAS is the first line of appeal for student discipline cases, controversial issues, and countless other issues that occur every day. Removing this local oversight will inevitably lead to a bottleneck of appeals at the State Superintendent's office. This will delay necessary action and justice for students and parents, creating a bureaucratic logjam rather than streamlining processes.

SB3334's proposal to require School Community Council (SCC) involvement in principal evaluation and hiring raises serious concerns related to governance, objectivity, confidentiality, and equity.

While SCCs play an important advisory role, expanding their authority into evaluation and hiring functions would: Threaten the professional integrity of sensitive personnel processes, introduce varied standards across schools due to differing SCC capacity, training, and composition, and risk grounding leadership decisions in local politics rather than instructional leadership expertise and educational standards.

Efficiency is a worthy goal, but SB 3334 achieves it by sacrificing local accountability and direct support for school leaders. We should be empowering our Complex Area Superintendents to better support our principals, not dismantling the leadership structures that stabilize our schools—particularly those serving high-need communities.

I urge the committee to **defer SB 3334** and instead engage principals, CAS, educators, and community stakeholders in thoughtful dialogue to strengthen—not eliminate—effective leadership structures within the Hawai'i State Department of Education.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 11:19:44 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alexandra Obra	Testifying for Waiāhole Elementary School	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions**

**TESTIFIER: Alexandra Obra, Waiāhole Elementary School Principal**

**POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

**I am writing to express my opposition to SB 3334. While I understand the intent to reduce "administrative burdens," this bill fails to recognize the essential regional leadership that Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) provide—particularly for rural and underserved communities.**

**My opposition is based on four critical concerns:**

**1. Erosion of the Tri-Level Leadership Framework**

**The CAS is not merely an administrative layer; they are the vital conduit connecting individual school needs with state-level initiatives. Eliminating this position severs the communication link between the "schoolhouse" and the Department of Education's central leadership. Without a CAS, our schools risk becoming "islands of operation," lacking a cohesive regional strategy or a direct line of advocacy at the state level.**

**2. Request for Additional Clarity on the Replacement for CAS**

**Section 17 of the bill is vague as to how CAS duties would be reassigned. If the thought was to return to district superintendents, that would greatly increase the number of schools under the supervision of a smaller number of individuals, which will lead to systemic neglect and burnout.**

**3. Improper Expansion of School Community Council (SCC) Authority**

**The bill proposes giving SCC evaluations a 50% weight in principal selection. We oppose this shift for the following reasons:**

- **Union Contract Conflicts:** This creates a "de facto" hiring power for SCCs that contradicts existing labor agreements.
- **Integrity of Evaluation:** This shift bypasses the professional, merit-based evaluation currently facilitated by the CAS. We are concerned that, without regional oversight, the selection process could be easily disrupted by a small number of disgruntled individuals rather than focused on professional competence.

#### **4. Risk of "Honolulu-Centric" Governance**

**Removing regional leadership altogether threatens to centralize power entirely in Honolulu. For rural complexes like Nanakuli-Waianae and for our colleagues on the Neighbor Islands, a centralized structure ignores our unique geographic, cultural, and socio-economic challenges. This bill risks creating a hyper-centralized system that lacks accountability to the specific communities it is meant to serve.**

**For these reasons, I urge the Committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain the regional leadership structure that ensures our schools, teachers, and students receive the specialized support they require. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.**

**Respectfully,**

**Alexandra Obra**

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:50:15 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ryan Kusuda	Testifying for Waikiki Elementary, Hawaii Department of Education	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**TO:** The Honorable Donna Mercado Kim, Chair; The Honorable Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair; and Members of the Committee on Education (EDU) **FROM: Ryan Kusuda**, Principal, Waikīkī Elementary School **RE: SB 3334 – RELATING TO EDUCATION (OPPOSE)**  
**HEARING:** February 12, 2026

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

My name is Ryan Kusuda, and I serve as the Principal of Waikīkī Elementary School. I come before you not only as a school leader within the Farrington-Kaiser-Kalani Complex but as a former social studies teacher. In our classrooms, we teach that history is a cycle; today, I am concerned that SB 3334 is a cycle back toward an antiquated, centralized past.

**1. Reverting to an Obsolete Model** According to the **Legislative Findings of Act 51**, the Legislature determined in 2004 that the Department’s structure was "too centralized" and that "significant changes need to be made to enhance Hawaii's public education system." Act 51 was codified with the explicit intent to "**place a far greater number of decisions... directly in the hands of individual schools and their leaders.**"

SB 3334 does the exact opposite. By repealing the CAS position, this bill strips away the very mechanism created to decentralize the DOE. It pulls the "final authority" for 258 schools back to a single office in Honolulu—the very definition of the "top-down" bureaucracy Act 51 sought to destroy.

**2. Preserving Essential Support and Local Oversight**

The legislative intent behind **Act 51** was to "promote excellence in learning" through localized school design and meaningful educator collaboration. As a principal operating within the Farrington-Kaiser-Kalani Complex, I can state unequivocally that my Complex Area Superintendent is not merely a layer of "middle management." According to the official **CAS Position Description**, this role provides critical functions that a centralized state office cannot replicate:

- **Talent Management and Recruitment:** The CAS is responsible for the vital work of "recruiting, selecting, onboarding, [and] assigning... quality school leaders" to ensure our campuses are led by capable professionals.
- **Instructional Coaching and Thought-Partnership:** A core function of the CAS is to provide "thought-partnership" and "frequent and actionable feedback" to principals to improve the conditions for learning in every classroom.
- **Fiscal and Operational Accountability:** The CAS is a primary safeguard for the Department, specifically tasked with the "reduction in number of procurement violations" and establishing remediation systems for "fiscal audit findings".

If the CAS position is repealed, who will provide the "thought-partnership" required to mentor the next generation of Hawaii's school leaders? Who will provide the granular, daily oversight necessary to ensure our school budgets remain compliant? The State Superintendent, tasked with managing **258 public schools** and a **\$2.1 billion budget**, cannot feasibly provide this level of direct, individualized support to every campus.

**3. Breaking the K-12 Pipeline** Act 51 emphasizes that the CAS ensures "**seamless transitions**" for students. The CAS is the only leader responsible for the "PK-12 feeder school" system. By repealing this position, SB 3334 breaks the link between our elementary, middle, and high schools. We risk returning to a fragmented system where a student's journey from Kindergarten to Graduation is no longer a cohesive, aligned experience.

**4. Accountability Requires Proximity** Act 51 was built on the principle that "**resources and decision-making should be situated closer to schools.**" Accountability is not achieved by moving power further away from the students; it is achieved through the localized, "frequent and actionable feedback" that only a CAS can provide.

**Conclusion** As a former social studies educator, I am reminded of the adage that those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. We moved away from a centralized system because it did not work for our children. SB 3334 is a retreat from the "Empowerment" model that this body championed two decades ago.

I respectfully urge the Committee to **hold SB 3334** and preserve the leadership structure that allows our schools to remain culturally attuned, fiscally responsible, and student-centered.

Mahalo,

Ryan Kusuda

Principal

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 11:11:07 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nikan Arapoff	Testifying for Wailuku Elementary School	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As Principal of Wailuku Elementary School,

I oppose SB3334. This bill would remove key protections for our stakeholders by eliminating the crucial position of the Complex Area Superintendent. The CAS holds principals accountable, oversees key initiatives proposed by the Legislature and other government entities, processes complaints from stakeholders, and has a critical role in guiding schools forward in this challenging time. Do not pass this bill.

## **Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill 3334**

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate,

My name is Keevan Matsumoto, and I serve as Vice Principal at Kaimuki High School. I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 3334.

I strongly believe in shared leadership, community voice, and meaningful engagement with families. At the same time, I have deep concerns that SB3334 would significantly weaken the operational stability, instructional coherence, and leadership infrastructure that our schools rely upon every day. Specifically, I am concerned about (1) the elimination of Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) positions and (2) proposed changes to principal evaluation and hiring procedures that require School Community Council (SCC) involvement.

### **Elimination of CAS Positions**

In Hawai'i's centralized statewide system, Complex Area Superintendents are not an extra layer of bureaucracy—they are a critical layer of coherence and direct support. As a school-based administrator, I see firsthand how essential CASs are in aligning schools to state priorities, ensuring compliance with federal and state mandates, and providing direct leadership during crisis situations and high-stakes decision-making.

Eliminating CAS positions would:

- Create inconsistencies in implementation across schools and complex areas.
- Remove essential instructional and operational guidance for principals and vice principals.
- Increase the workload and compliance burden on school leaders without adding authority or resources.
- Weaken systemwide alignment around student achievement, attendance, and accountability goals.

CASs serve as thought partners in school improvement planning, staffing decisions, safety protocols, and instructional monitoring. Their role is especially vital for schools serving high-needs populations (like Kaimuki High School), where coordinated support is critical. Removing this level of leadership would not decentralize effectively—it would destabilize.

### **Changes to Principal Evaluation and Hiring Procedures**

The proposal to require SCC involvement in principal evaluation and hiring raises serious concerns regarding governance, objectivity, confidentiality, and equity across schools.

SCCs play an important advisory role in school-level planning and community engagement. However, expanding their authority into personnel evaluation and hiring would:

- Compromise the confidentiality and integrity of personnel processes.
- Introduce inconsistencies across campuses due to differing levels of training and capacity.
- Risk politicizing leadership decisions rather than grounding them in instructional leadership expertise.

- Blur lines of accountability within a centralized statewide system.

Principal evaluation and hiring are complex processes that require deep knowledge of leadership standards, collective bargaining agreements, compliance requirements, and systemwide priorities. These responsibilities must remain within a structured, professionally trained framework to ensure fairness, consistency, and legal integrity.

### **Conclusion**

While SB3334 may be well-intended in its effort to increase community voice, its proposed changes would have unintended consequences that weaken leadership structures and reduce system coherence. Strong schools require strong leadership systems. Eliminating CAS positions and restructuring evaluation and hiring processes without a clear statewide framework would destabilize schools—particularly those serving vulnerable and high-needs students.

I respectfully urge the Senate to reject SB3334 and instead engage principals, CAS, educators, and community partners in collaborative dialogue to strengthen—not dismantle—the leadership structures that support Hawai'i's public schools.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued commitment to the students, families, and educators of Hawai'i.

Respectfully,



Keevan K. Matsumoto  
Vice Principal  
Kaimuki High School

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 11:38:31 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cindi Rivera	Testifying for Nanakuli-Waianae Complex Area	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Testimony in Opposition of SB 3334**

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Cindi Rivera, and I serve as the Induction Program Coordinator within a Complex Area that supports nine public schools in a high-need community. I respectfully submit testimony in **OPPOSITION to SB 3334**.

While the stated goal of this bill is to "streamline" administration, the reality is that eliminating the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) would dismantle the essential support systems that keep our schools functioning and our teachers in their classrooms. If the CAS position is eliminated, the "middle" of our support system falls out.

Effective induction is more than a welcoming committee; it is a rigorous professional system. Within our Complex Area, we provide a level of support that a centralized state office cannot sustain:

- **Mentor Professional Standards:** Our complex team provides the structured training and ongoing coaching that school-level mentors need to be effective. Without complex-level oversight, the quality of mentorship would become wildly inconsistent from school to school.
- **Direct Support for Beginning Teachers:** We manage induction for a high number of new educators, providing the "high-touch" contact required to prevent burnout and turnover.

If the CAS position is eliminated, the state office is too far away to provide daily mentorship, and individual schools are too busy with operations to provide their own high-level professional development.

The proposal to have School Community Councils (SCCs) submit principal evaluations to the State Superintendent is deeply concerning. While community input is vital, SCCs are composed of volunteers who may lack the professional pedagogical expertise required to evaluate a school leader's performance fairly and objectively. Removing the CAS—a seasoned educator who understands the daily nuances of school leadership—strips away the professional accountability necessary for a healthy school system.

For the sake of our teachers, our principals, and most importantly, our students, I urge you to **HOLD** this bill and maintain the Complex Area Superintendent structure.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Cindi Rivera

Nanakuli-Waianae Complex Area

Kapolei, HI 96707

8083063593

cindi.rivera@k12.hi.us

**Date:** Friday February 13, 2026

**Time:** 1:05pm

**Location:** Conference Room CR 229 &  
Videoconference

**Committee:** EDN

**Department:** Ka'ū Kea'au Pāhoa Complex Area

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education** Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**TESTIFIER(S):** Elaine Higa, District Educational Specialist (Literacy)

**POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 3334. As a Complex Area Educational Specialist focusing on literacy within the Ka'ū-Kea'au-Pāhoa Complex Area, I see firsthand how the regional leadership of a Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) is vital to implementing the specialized instructional supports our students need to succeed.

My opposition is based on four critical concerns regarding the impact this bill would have on literacy and student achievement:

**1. Disruption of Cohesive Literacy Initiatives:** The CAS serves as the essential conduit between state-level literacy mandates and the specific needs of our "schoolhouse". Without a CAS to provide regional strategy, our schools risk becoming "islands of operation," leading to fragmented literacy programs that lack the cohesive oversight necessary to ensure every student reaches grade-level proficiency.

**2. Loss of Localized Instructional Advocacy:** Section 17 of this bill remains vague regarding the reassignment of CAS duties. Transitioning to a centralized or district-wide model would significantly increase the number of schools under a single supervisor, inevitably leading to systemic neglect. For a specialist in literacy, the loss of a CAS means losing a direct advocate who understands our unique geographic and socio-economic challenges and ensures that literacy resources are prioritized for our rural and underserved communities

**3. Impact on Professional Evaluation and Instructional Integrity:** The proposal to give School Community Councils (SCC) a 50% weight in principal selection threatens the integrity of merit-based evaluation. Literacy improvement requires school leaders with deep instructional competence. The current evaluation process, facilitated by the CAS, ensures that principals are selected based on their professional ability to lead complex academic transformations—including literacy—rather than being influenced by local politics or small groups of individuals.

**4. Threat of Hyper-Centralized Governance:** Removing regional leadership threatens to centralize power in Honolulu, ignoring the specific cultural and literacy needs of our Neighbor Island students. Effective literacy instruction is not "one-size-fits-all". Without a CAS to bridge the gap, our schools lose the specialized, regional support required to address the unique literacy challenges faced by the students in our specific complex area.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to hold SB 3334. At its heart, literacy is about more than just reading and writing; it is about giving every child in our community the voice and the tools they need to build a bright future. This work requires a deeply personal, localized connection that only regional leadership can provide. By maintaining the current structure, you are ensuring that our literacy efforts remain rooted in the specific needs of our students, protecting the progress we have made and the dreams we are helping our children achieve. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Elaine Higa

District Educational Specialist (Literacy) Ka'ū-Kea'au-Pāhoa Complex Area

STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO  
THE 'AIEA COMPLEX

February 11, 2026

Dear Madame Chair Kim,

We, the Principals of the 'Aiea Complex, collectively submit this testimony to express our strong opposition to **SB3334**. Representing a community of approximately 50,468 individuals, we believe this bill would significantly compromise our ability to lead our schools effectively.

SB3334 seeks to abolish the complex area superintendent (CAS) position to address "unclear authority structures" and "administrative burdens". From our perspective as school leaders on the ground, this proposal fails to account for the staggering scale and specific needs of the Hawaii Department of Education.

Our collective concerns regarding the repeal of the CAS position include:

- **Unreasonable Scope of Responsibility:** This bill would redirect large-scale issues above the authority of the Principal directly to the State Superintendent. At 'Aiea High School alone, we serve a student population with diverse needs, including a nearly 50% eligibility rate for free or reduced lunch and an increasing population of English Learners (9.7%) and Special Education students (11.5%). Managing these nuanced needs for nearly 300 schools from a single central office is administratively impossible.
- **Loss of Local Leadership:** The CAS is a vital intermediary for 'Aiea, overseeing essential functions like fiscal support and curriculum development. Localized leadership is critical for us to address our specific challenges, such as closing achievement gaps in SBA Math and ELA and improving attendance rates among our high-needs and Pacific Islander subgroups.
- **Over-Centralized Principal Selection:** SB3334 gives the State Superintendent final authority over all principal appointments. We believe removing the CAS—who has the most balanced knowledge of our unique school culture—will lead to a "one-size-fits-all" approach. 'Aiea High School is built on core values of Integrity, Grit, and 'Ohana; we need a selection process that understands these specific community pillars.
- **Impact on Community Engagement:** Our data shows that while teacher engagement is increasing, parent perceptions of safety and overall satisfaction have recently decreased. Strengthening parent engagement is one of our primary challenges. Removing the CAS layer removes a key administrative voice that helps facilitate the school-home relationships and two-way communication necessary to rebuild this trust.

We recognize the legislature's wish to streamline accountability, but removing our Complex Area Superintendents will only create a bottleneck at the state level that will ultimately harm our students and the 'Aiea community.

**As the unified leadership of the 'Aiea Complex, we stand opposed to SB3334.**

Sincerely,

**The Principals of the 'Aiea Complex**

**To:** The Senate Committee on Education

**From:** Retired Principals from Baldwin Kekaulike Kulanihako'i Maui Complex Area, Maui District

**Date:** February 11, 2026

**Re:** Testimony in **Strong Opposition** to SB 3334, Relating to Education

Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee,

As **retired principals** who have dedicated our careers to the students and communities of Hawaii, we are writing to express our **strong opposition** to SB 3334. Based on our collective decades of "on the ground" experience leading schools, we believe this bill fundamentally misunderstands the practical realities of school administration and will lead to a fragmented, unresponsive system. Our opposition is rooted in the following professional concerns:

**1. Geographic Isolation and Communication Delays** Eliminating the **Complex Area**

**Superintendent (CAS)**—the "chief administrative officer" for regional complexes—is a mistake. In our experience, neighbor island schools already face communication lags; removing localized leadership ensures delays when schools face **critical needs** like student discipline or vandalism. A distant "administrative framework" cannot replace a local leader who understands unique island challenges.

**2. Accountability Without Authority** The bill holds principals to a standard of "**fiscal accountability**" while simultaneously stripping their financial autonomy.

- **Centralized Budget Control:** Schools must now seek approval for financial plans from an "appropriate authority" designated by rule, rather than a regional leader.
- **No Revenue Authority:** Unlike some mainland models, this bill provides no authority for schools to levy taxes or independently generate revenue. Demanding fiscal results while centralizing budget approval creates an impossible situation for school leaders.

**3. Erosion of Professional Leadership** Section 11 grants **School Community Councils (SCCs)** a **50% weight** in principal evaluations. While we value community input, SCC members often lack the professional background to evaluate the technical complexities of running a school. Furthermore, granting the State Superintendent "**final authority to appoint a principal**" eliminates regional professional oversight and centralizes power in Honolulu.

**Conclusion**

We retired principals have seen many "reforms," but SB 3334 is a step backward. It removes the very leaders who provide the support, monitoring, and regional expertise necessary for a principal to succeed. **The Complex Area Superintendent is a vital support system, not an "administrative burden"**.

For the sake of our former colleagues still in the field and the students they serve, we respectfully urge you to **hold SB 3334**.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Bruce Anderson  
Maui High School Principal, Retired  
[bruce32go@yahoo.com](mailto:bruce32go@yahoo.com)

John Costales, Jr  
Kalama Intermediate School Principal, Retired  
[icostales14@yahoo.com](mailto:icostales14@yahoo.com)

Kathleen Dimino  
Pukalani Elementary School Principal, Retired  
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Robyn Honda  
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Jamie Yap  
Maui High School Principal, Retired  
[jyapuproar@gmail.com](mailto:jyapuproar@gmail.com)

**Date:** Friday February 13, 2026  
**Time:** 1:05pm  
**Location:** Conference Room CR 229 & Videoconference  
**Committee:** EDN

**Department:** Ka'u High and Pahala Elementary School

**BILL:** SB 3334, Relating to Education Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**TESTIFIER(S):** Sharon Beck, Principal

**POSITION:** OPPOSITION AND COMMENT

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

I am writing to express opposition to SB 3334. While I understand the intent to reduce "administrative burdens," this bill fails to recognize the essential regional leadership that Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) provide—particularly for rural and underserved communities.

Our opposition is based on four critical concerns:

### **1. Erosion of the Tri-Level Leadership Framework**

The CAS is not merely an administrative layer; they are the vital conduit connecting individual school needs with state-level initiatives. Eliminating this position severs the communication link between the "schoolhouse" and the Department of Education's central leadership. Without a CAS, our schools risk becoming "islands of operation," lacking a cohesive regional strategy or a direct line of advocacy at the state level.

### **2. Request for Additional Clarity on the Replacement for CAS**

Section 17 of the bill is vague as to how CAS duties would be reassigned. If the thought was to return to district superintendents, that would greatly increase the number of schools under the supervision of a smaller number of individuals, which will lead to systemic neglect and burnout.

### **3. Improper Expansion of School Community Council (SCC) Authority**

The bill proposes giving SCC evaluations a 50% weight in principal selection. We oppose this shift for the following reasons:

- **Union Contract Conflicts:** This creates a "de facto" hiring power for SCCs that contradicts existing labor agreements.
- **Integrity of Evaluation:** This shift bypasses the professional, merit-based evaluation currently facilitated by the CAS. We are concerned that, without regional oversight, the

selection process could be easily disrupted by a small number of disgruntled individuals rather than focused on professional competence.

#### **4. Risk of "Honolulu-Centric" Governance**

Removing regional leadership altogether threatens to centralize power entirely in Honolulu. For rural complexes like Nanakuli-Waianae and for our colleagues on the Neighbor Islands, a centralized structure ignores our unique geographic, cultural, and socio-economic challenges. This bill risks creating a hyper-centralized system that lacks accountability to the specific communities it is meant to serve.

For these reasons, we urge the Committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain the regional leadership structure that ensures our schools, teachers, and students receive the specialized support they require.

I have been a teacher in the Ka'u District since 1992 and am currently finishing my 20th year as principal of Ka'u High and Pahala Elementary School. I have witnessed the benefits of having a CAS and resource team providing targeted support for each of our unique nine school communities. As a rural and isolated school in Ka'u it is essential to have the resources readily available to serve and support the students of Ka'u. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Sharon Beck

Principal

**Date:** Friday February 13, 2026  
**Time:** 1:05 pm  
**Location:** Conference Room CR 229 &  
Videoconference  
**Committee:** EDN

**Department:** Ka'u, Kea'au, Pahoia Complex Area

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education:** Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**TESTIFIER:** M. Malia Naeole-Takasato

**POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

As a Comprehensive Literacy State Development Resource Teacher (CLSD RT) serving directly under the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) in our complex area, I work daily on the front lines supporting schools, teachers, and students—particularly with the implementation of the Hawaii DOE's eight literacy levers, the CLSD Federal grant, instructional coaching, and targeted interventions for our most vulnerable learners.

I am writing to strongly oppose **SB 3334**, which seeks to repeal the CAS position. This proposal overlooks the indispensable regional leadership that the CAS provides, especially in rural, neighbor island, and underserved complexes like Ka`ū, Kea`au, and Pāhoa (KKP).

My opposition stems from four key concerns grounded in my KKP complex area experience with our CAS:

1. **Undermining the Tri-Level Leadership Framework.** In my role, I rely on the CAS to advocate for resources, align complex-wide strategies (such as the Hawaii Department of Education's (Eight) Literacy Levers - initiatives, CLSD grant), CAS ensures that school-level realities inform decisions at the state level. Eliminating this position would isolate schools as disconnected "islands," weakening our ability to respond cohesively to regional challenges and diluting direct advocacy for our students and educators. Erosion of this leadership framework will ultimately lead to the breakdown of systems at the school level.
2. **Lack of Clear Plan for Reassigning CAS Responsibilities** Section 17 of the bill provides insufficient detail on how critical CAS duties—such as overseeing complex-area

special education services, supporting resource teachers like myself, coordinating multi-school interventions, and providing principal supervision—would be reassigned. Reverting to a district superintendent model would overload several leaders with dramatically more schools, likely resulting in reduced support, delayed responses to urgent needs (e.g., crisis interventions), and increased burnout across the system. This ambiguity risks creating gaps that directly impact classroom support and student outcomes.

3. **Inappropriate Expansion of School Community Council (SCC) Authority in Principal Selection.** Assigning 50% weight to SCC evaluations in principal hiring raises serious concerns from my perspective, supporting school-level operations:
  - It conflicts with existing union contracts and established hiring protocols.
  - Many stakeholders who make up a School Community Council are not trained educators. Additionally, most are not trained educational administrators. To leave the selection, oversight, and progress monitoring of our schools to the SCC is simply frightening.
4. **Decentralize the DOE and break the hold of Honolulu-centric decision-making.** The State often overlooks the distinct geographic, cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic realities of school communities outside O‘ahu—particularly those on the Neighbor Islands and in rural areas such as Ka‘ū, Kea‘au, and Pāhoā. In my complex KKP, our CAS visits schools on a weekly basis. Through these regular on-site engagements, the CAS collects timely, context-specific data that allows us to celebrate each school's strengths while directly addressing its areas of need. The CAS also establishes systems for frequent, meaningful sharing of effective practices across schools, enabling successful strategies to be replicated where they fit best locally. A fully centralized structure would eliminate current practices and systems in KKP that are responsive to our schools. The elimination of CAS will likely distance decision-making from our communities, dilute local accountability, and—without the tailored support provided by a dedicated CAS—widen existing inequities for our students, especially in geographically isolated or underserved areas. The current decentralized approach, with an empowered CAS, truly provides access to support, which leads to equitable outcomes for all keiki.

For these reasons, rooted in my direct daily work under the CAS, I respectfully urge the Committee to **hold SB 3334** and maintain the regional leadership structure that ensures our

schools, teachers, and students receive the specialized support they require. Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to provide testimony from a resource teacher's perspective.

Respectfully,

M. Malia Naeole-Takasato

Comprehension Literacy State Development Resource Teacher

Ka'ū, Kea'au, and Pāhoa Complex Area

Hawai'i State Department of Education



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Kāneʻohe Elementary School  
45-495 Kamehameha Highway  
Kaneohe, HI 96744  
Phone 808-305-0000 • Fax 808-235-9185

**Date:** 02/13/2026  
**Time:** 1:05 PM  
**Location:** 229  
**Committee:** Education

**Department:** Education  
**Person Testifying:** The Principals of Castle-Kahuku Complex  
**Title of Bill:** SB3334 RELATING TO EDUCATION

**Position:** OPPOSE

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee

We the undersigned strongly oppose this bill for the following reasons.

Complex-Area Superintendents play a critical role in supporting schools within a complex-area by setting a clear, unified vision that aligns instructional initiatives; acting as a liaison with state entities often advocating on behalf of schools such as ensuring unsafe facility concerns are addressed; coaching, mentoring and evaluating principals to encourage continuous improvement on behalf of students; networking with and recruiting neighborhood partners to collaborate with schools and offer opportunities to students that build a greater sense of kuleana to their community; and interfacing with parents and caregivers to address concerns while fostering positive relationships.

As principals, we rely on our Complex-Area Superintendent to act swiftly and provide personalized counsel informed by a thorough knowledge of our schools. At present, should the position be eliminated and these essential responsibilities reassigned to the superintendent then responses and impact will surely be diluted. Instead of being managed by someone overseeing 9 to 28 schools within a limited geographic area of 550 to 1000 square miles, the superintendent and two deputy superintendents would need to play a similar role for 258 schools covering 10,000 square miles in addition to all their regular duties.

Further should the task of evaluating principals fall upon the School Community Council (SCC), there would be an inherent conflict of interest since teachers and classified employees are members of the SCC. Whether influenced by a fear of retaliation or motivated by a personal grievance, subordinates have a difficult time impartially evaluating their supervisors. In the end, this subverts the goal of using the evaluation results for professional development and diminishes trust in the authenticity of the evaluations.

Mahalo for your consideration of this testimony.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Alex Obra, Waiāhole Elementary School	Kathy Kahikina, Pū'ōhala Elementary School
Bernadette Tyrel, Castle High School	Keala Ili, Kahalu'u Elementary School
Danny Garcia, He'eia Elementary School	Kimi Ikeda, Ahuimanu Elementary School
Derek Minakami, Kāne'ohe Elementary School	Loha Kaka, Lā'ie Elementary School
Elissa Johnson, Rev. Benjamin Parker Elementary School	Ryan Micale, King Intermediate School
Eliza Elkington, Sunset Beach Elementary School	U'i Kaitoku, Hau'ula Elementary School
Ikaika Plunkett, Kahuku Elementary School	Walter Santiago, Kahuku High and Intermediate School
Jennifer Luke Payne, Ka'a'awa Elementary School	Wess Unten, Kapunahala Elementary School

**Date:** Friday, February 13, 2026

**Time:** 1:05 pm

**Location:** Conference Room CR 229 &  
Videoconference

**Committee:** EDN

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education** Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY BY:** Kailua–Kalāheo Complex Area Principals

**POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

We respectfully submit this written testimony in OPPOSITION to SB 3334.

While we understand the intent to reduce administrative burden and clarify authority, we do not believe this bill will strengthen leadership decision-making or improve support for schools.

For our schools, the Complex Area Superintendent is not an unnecessary layer of administration. The CAS is the only consistent regional leader who understands our community context, school culture, staffing realities, and instructional and operational challenges. The CAS serves as a critical connector between school leaders and state-level expectations, providing timely guidance on personnel, compliance, instructional improvement, and crisis response.

As school principals, complex-area leadership functions as a stabilizing support for principals navigating competing mandates, increasing compliance demands, and limited operational capacity. Principals consistently rely on CAS leadership to help interpret system expectations and remain focused on school-level priorities. Eliminating this role will increase isolation and administrative burden for school leaders and reduce coherence and consistency across schools.

We are also deeply concerned about the proposal to require SCC evaluations to account for fifty percent of the overall evaluation in the selection of a principal. While community voice is essential and valued, this shift fundamentally alters school governance and undermines professional leadership structures.

Our collective experience shows that much of a principal's work is complex, technical, and largely invisible outside the role. High-stakes evaluation is most effective when conducted by leaders who fully understand the scope, constraints, and responsibilities of the principalship. Assigning such significant evaluative weight to a volunteer body introduces risks of inconsistency, politicization, and disruption to school operations.

Finally, from the perspective of school leaders, unclear authority structures are not created by the Complex Area level. They are more often the result of overlapping state initiatives, shifting

mandates, and competing priorities. In practice, the CAS is one of the few roles that helps create clarity and a more workable leadership environment for schools.

We respectfully request that the Committee hold SB 3334.

At a minimum, we urge the Committee to:

- retain the Complex Area Superintendent position; and
- remove or amend the provision assigning fifty percent of principal selection evaluation authority to School Community Councils.

Our schools need stronger, coherent leadership systems, not the removal of regional leaders who understand our communities and support school-level leaders every day.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

Respectfully,

Kenneth Agcaoili, Principal, Kalāheo High School

Jamie Dela Cruz, Principal, Waimānalo Elementary & Intermediate School

Lisa DeLong, Principal,, 'Aikahi Elementary School

Allyson Doherty, Principal, Kailua Elementary School

Maureen Dunn-Anzai, Principal, Keolu Elementary School

Jill LaBoy, Principal, Kailua High School

Nathan Maeda, Principal, Kailua Intermediate School

Brett Matsukawa, Principal, Mōkapu Elementary School

Stacey Oshio, Principal, Olomana School

Resha Ramolete, Principal, Kainalu Elementary School

Heidi Rezentes, Principal, Blanche Pope Elementary School

Noel Richardson, Principal, Enchanted Lake Elementary School

Chanda Rowley, Principal, Ka'elepulu Elementary School

Kau'i Tanaka, Principal, Maunawili Elementary School

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

**DATE:** Friday, February 13, 2026

**TIME:** 1:05PM

**LOCATION:** Conference Room CR 229 & Videoconference

**Committee:** EDN

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education** Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**TESTIFIER(S):** Adria Medeiros, Principal Mountain View Elementary School

**POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 3334, which proposes eliminating Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) positions and shifting principal evaluation input responsibilities to School Community Councils. As a school principal in the Hawai'i State Department of Education, I am deeply concerned about the unintended consequences this legislation could have on leadership stability, operational effectiveness, and student outcomes across our public schools.

SB3334 seeks to remove the Complex Area Superintendent role as part of an effort to streamline administrative structures and revisit leadership systems established under Act 51. However, this proposal does not fully account for how CAS leadership functions in practice. The CAS structure is not administrative redundancy; it is a critical layer that helps schools operate effectively within a complex and demanding educational environment. My CAS serves as my direct supervisor, but more importantly as a strategic leadership partner who provides guidance in moments of crisis, helps navigate complex conflicts, supports operational decision-making, and ensures alignment between state priorities and school-level implementation. Removing this position would not increase efficiency; it would weaken the leadership infrastructure that directly supports student outcomes and school stability.

From a daily operational perspective, the absence of CAS leadership would introduce significant fragmentation. Principals would lose immediate access to experienced decision-making support during emergencies, personnel conflicts, compliance challenges, and fiscal planning cycles. Coordination between schools would weaken, professional learning systems would lose coherence, and escalation pathways for urgent issues to State level leadership would become unclear or delayed. This would not streamline leadership; it would decentralize responsibility without providing replacement capacity, increasing risk exposure for schools and the students we serve. In a State that functions as one school district, this poses a significant threat to student success.

Under the leadership of the CAS, our Complex Area teams also provide indispensable support in areas that directly affect student outcomes, including professional development, curricular implementation, and student support. These services cannot easily be replicated at the school level and cannot simply be absorbed by already overextended staff. Eliminating this support would shift systemic burdens

downward onto campuses, reducing our ability to focus on teaching and learning - the very outcome this system exists to protect.

I am equally concerned about the proposal within SB3334 that places principal evaluation input in the hands of School Community Councils (SCCs). SCCs serve an important advisory and engagement role, and their partnership is valued. However, evaluating professional leadership performance requires deep contextual understanding of instructional systems, personnel management, legal obligations, and operational complexity. While SCC members provide valuable community perspective, most do not have sustained exposure to the full scope of leadership responsibilities or training in leadership evaluation standards. Assigning evaluative authority in this manner risks undermining the fairness, rigor, and professional integrity of principal assessment.

Principal evaluation should remain the responsibility of trained educational supervisors who possess the expertise, sustained interaction, and system-level perspective necessary to assess leadership performance comprehensively. The current structure allows for meaningful feedback, professional growth, and accountability aligned to established leadership standards. Altering this structure weakens those safeguards.

I offer these concerns not only from a professional standpoint, but from lived experience shaped by a long-standing professional relationship within this system. I have been mentored by my current Complex Area Superintendent since I was a first-year teacher, when she served as my complex area Resource Teacher. She later became the Vice Principal at my school, a role I eventually assumed under her continued mentorship when she moved on, and she now serves as my Complex Area Superintendent. This progression reflects the intentional leadership development and continuity that the CAS structure makes possible. Over the years, she has provided guidance, support, and helped me grow from classroom educator to school leader. This continuity reflects not only individual mentorship, but the leadership development pipeline that prepares and sustains qualified school leaders across the state. That depth of institutional knowledge, trust, and professional understanding cannot be replicated through fragmented supervisory structures at the state level. Removing this layer of leadership would not only disrupt operational support - it would dismantle mentorship pathways and leadership cultivation that sustain strong schools across our system.

Policies intended to improve efficiency must be grounded in operational reality and in their impact on student learning environments statewide. SB3334 risks destabilizing leadership systems that currently enable schools to respond effectively to student needs, community expectations, and state accountability requirements. I respectfully urge the Legislature to reconsider advancing SB3334 and to engage directly with practicing school leaders before making structural changes of this magnitude.

Mahalo for your time and for your continued commitment to the students and communities we serve.

Adria Medeiros

Principal

Mountain View Elementary School

**Date:** Friday February 13, 2026  
**Time:** 1:05pm  
**Location:** Conference Room CR 229 &  
Videoconference  
**Committee:** EDN

**Department:** Department of Education

**BILL:** SB 3334, Relating to Education Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**TESTIFIER(S):** Trisha Sanborn, Kohala Middle School Principal

**POSITION:** OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS

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

I am writing to express my opposition to SB 3334. While I understand the intent to reduce "administrative burdens," this bill fails to recognize the essential regional leadership that Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) provide—particularly for rural and underserved communities.

My opposition is based on five critical concerns:

### **1. Erosion of the Tri-Level Leadership Framework**

The CAS is not merely an administrative layer; they are the vital conduit connecting individual school needs with state-level initiatives. Eliminating this position severs the communication link between the "schoolhouse" and the Department of Education's central leadership. Without a CAS, our schools risk becoming "islands of operation," lacking a cohesive regional strategy or a direct line of advocacy at the state level.

### **2. Request for Additional Clarity on the Replacement for CAS**

Section 17 of the bill is vague as to how CAS duties would be reassigned. If the thought was to return to district superintendents, that would greatly increase the number of schools under the supervision of a smaller number of individuals, which will lead to systemic neglect and burnout.

### **3. Improper Expansion of School Community Council (SCC) Authority**

The bill proposes giving SCC evaluations a 50% weight in principal selection. We oppose this shift for the following reasons:

- **Union Contract Conflicts:** This creates a "de facto" hiring power for SCCs that contradicts existing labor agreements.
- **Integrity of Evaluation:** This shift bypasses the professional, merit-based evaluation currently facilitated by the CAS. We are concerned that, without regional oversight, the

selection process could be easily disrupted by a small number of disgruntled individuals who do may not understand all the intricacies of school leadership and operations, rather than focused on professional competence.

#### **4. Risk of "Honolulu-Centric" Governance**

Removing regional leadership altogether threatens to centralize power entirely in Honolulu. For rural complexes like Kohala, a centralized structure ignores our unique geographic, cultural, and socio-economic challenges. This bill risks creating a hyper-centralized system that lacks accountability to the specific communities it is meant to serve.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain the regional leadership structure that ensures our schools, teachers, and students receive the specialized support they require.

#### **5. Loss of an Important Resource for Neighbor Island, Rural Small Schools**

In the last 5 years that I have been at Kohala Middle, CAS Snelling has been instrumental in finding resources for our small school. She has secured countless community partnerships that we require to appropriately provide a whole child education for our students. She finds and writes grants that are imperative to giving our students access to activities and experiences. She is an advocate for our students, family, school and community. Our school has received more advocacy, funding, resources, opportunities, personnel, and guidance from CAS Snelling than from any other single entity or organization (including our policy makers, whom I've never met). Taking away this integral player in student support is irresponsible, regardless of what your few vocal constituents may say. I'd like to invite you to Kohala Middle School, so that you can see for yourself how much our CAS has done for our school, before making any decisions that could harm our children and our community.

Respectfully,

Trisha Sanborn  
Principal, Kohala Middle School

**Date:** Friday February 13, 2026  
**Time:** 1:05pm  
**Location:** Conference Room CR 229 &  
Videoconference  
**Committee:** EDN

**Department:** Hawaii Department of Education

**BILL:** SB 3334, Relating to Education Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**TESTIFIER(S):** Hannah Loyola

**POSITION:** OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS

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

I am writing to express my opposition to SB 3334. Although the intent may be to reduce "administrative burdens," this bill fails to recognize the essential leadership that Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) provide—particularly for rural schools like Kohala Elementary School.

My opposition is based on four critical concerns:

### **1. Erosion of the Tri-Level Leadership Framework**

The CAS is not just an administrative layer; they are vital in connecting individual school needs with state-level initiatives. Eliminating this position would break the communication link between Kohala Elementary School and the Department of Education's central leadership and our CAS has been an advocate for our rural schools. Without a CAS, schools would lack a cohesive local school improvement efforts. In West Hawaii Complex, CAS Snelling is leading all schools in the Professional Learning Community at Work Process to ensure all students are learning at high levels.

### **2. Request for Additional Clarity on the Replacement for CAS**

Section 17 of the bill is vague as to how CAS duties would be reassigned. My concern is that if we return to district superintendents, it would greatly increase the number of schools under the supervision of fewer individuals, leading to systemic neglect and burnout. This would also increase the likelihood of no support for very remote schools like mine.

### **3. Improper Expansion of School Community Council (SCC) Authority**

The bill proposes giving SCC evaluations a 50% weight in principal selection. I oppose this shift for the following reasons:

- **Union Contract Conflicts:** This creates a "de facto" hiring power for SCCs that contradicts existing labor agreements.
- **Integrity of Evaluation:** This shift bypasses the professional, merit-based evaluation currently facilitated by the CAS. My concern is that, without regional oversight, the selection process could be easily disrupted by a small number of disgruntled individuals rather than focused on professional competence.

#### **4. Risk of "Honolulu-Centric" Governance**

Removing regional leadership altogether threatens to centralize power entirely in Honolulu.

For rural complexes like Kohala Complex, a centralized structure ignores our unique geographic, cultural, and socio-economic challenges. This bill risks creating a hyper-centralized system that lacks accountability to the specific communities it is meant to serve.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the Committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain the regional leadership structure that ensures our schools, teachers, and students receive the specialized support they require.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Hannah Loyola, Kohala Elementary School Principal

**Date:** Friday February 13, 2026  
**Time:** 1:05pm  
**Location:** Conference Room CR 229 &  
Videoconference  
**Committee:** EDN

**Department:** Hawaii Department of Education, Maui District

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education** Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**TESTIFIER(S):** Baldwin-Kekaulike-Kūlanihāko'i-Maui Complex Area Principals

**POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

We are writing to express our opposition to SB 3334. While we understand the intent to reduce "administrative burdens," this bill fails to recognize the essential regional leadership that Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) provide—particularly for rural and underserved communities.

Our opposition is based on four critical concerns:

**1. Erosion of the Tri-Level Leadership Framework**

The CAS is the primary bridge between our school communities and state-level leadership. Eliminating this position doesn't just remove a layer of management; it creates a disconnect that leaves our schools isolated from the broader system. Without a CAS to translate policy into local action and advocate for our specific complex needs, we lose the cohesion that keeps our schools moving in the same direction. This disconnection will lead to inconsistent service delivery for students and the loss of a pulse on our schools that ensures state-level policies are actually grounded in the realities of our diverse communities.

**2. Request for Additional Clarity on the Replacement for CAS**

Section 17 of SB3334 lacks clear detail on how CAS responsibilities would be reassigned. Reverting to a district model would create an unsustainable span of control, leading to systemic oversight gaps and administrative burnout that would ultimately disadvantage our schools.

**3. Improper Expansion of School Community Council (SCC) Authority**

The bill proposes giving SCC evaluations a 50% weight in principal selection. We oppose this shift for the following reasons:

- **Union Contract Conflicts:** This creates a "de facto" hiring power for SCCs that contradicts existing labor agreements.

- **Integrity of Evaluation:** This shift bypasses the professional, merit-based evaluation currently facilitated by the CAS. We are concerned that, without regional oversight, the selection process could be easily disrupted by a small number of disgruntled individuals rather than focused on professional competence.

#### 4. Risk of "Oahu-Centric" Governance

Removing regional leadership altogether threatens to centralize power entirely in Oahu. For rural complexes and for our colleagues on the Neighbor Islands, a centralized structure ignores our unique geographic, cultural, and socio-economic challenges. This bill risks creating a hyper-centralized system that lacks accountability to the specific communities it is meant to serve.

For these reasons, we urge the Committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain the regional leadership structure that ensures our schools, teachers, and students receive the specialized support they require. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Baldwin-Kekaulike-Kūlanihāko'i-Maui Complex Area Principals



[Sarah Romano Saget \(Feb 12, 2026 10:07:19 HST\)](#)

Sarah Romano-Saget  
Haiku Elementary



[Traci Ostermiller \(Feb 12, 2026 09:39:29 HST\)](#)

Traci Ostermiller  
Kulanihako'i High School



[Paula Herbaugh \(Feb 12, 2026 08:02:10 HST\)](#)

Paula Herbaugh  
Kula Elementary



[Keoni Wilhelm \(Feb 11, 2026 20:54:59 HST\)](#)

Keoni Wilhelm  
Baldwin High School



Jacquelyn Mccandless  
Maui Waena Intermediate



[Nikan Arapoff \(Feb 12, 2026 07:41:45 HST\)](#)

Nikan Arapoff  
Wailuku Elementary



[Tracy Lui \(Feb 12, 2026 05:22:34 HST\)](#)

Tracy Lui  
Kahului Elementary



[Barbara Oura Tavares \(Feb 12, 2026 08:03:10 HST\)](#)

Barbara Oura Tavares  
Lihikai Elementary

*Merilee Valentino*

[Merilee Valentino \(Feb 12, 2026 08:24:14 HST\)](#)

Merilee Vanlentino  
Paia Elementary

*Tami Marie Haili*

[Tami Marie Haili \(Feb 12, 2026 09:09:32 HST\)](#)

Tami Haili  
Kalama Intermediate

*Ginifer Nania*

[Ginifer Nania \(Feb 11, 2026 21:06:04 HST\)](#)

Ginifer Nania  
Makawao Elementary

*Gary Kanamori*

[Gary Kanamori \(Feb 12, 2026 07:22:32 HST\)](#)

Gary Kanamori  
Pukalani Elementary

*Ty Ogasawara*

[Ty Ogasawara \(Feb 11, 2026 21:04:11 HST\)](#)

Ty Ogasawara  
Maui High School

*Paula M. Inouye*

[Paula M. Inouye \(Feb 12, 2026 05:05:44 HST\)](#)

Paula Inouye  
Waihee Elementary

*Chad Okamoto*

[Chad Okamoto \(Feb 12, 2026 06:53:04 HST\)](#)

Chad Okamoto  
Pu'u Kukui Elementary

*Matt Dillon*

[Matt Dillon \(Feb 12, 2026 10:55:51 HST\)](#)

Matt Dillon  
Iao Intermediate

*Timothy Shim*

[Timothy Shim \(Feb 12, 2026 08:00:16 HST\)](#)

Timothy Shim  
Pomaika'i Elementary

*Amy Strand*

[Amy Strand \(Feb 12, 2026 10:33:06 HST\)](#)

Amy Strand  
King Kekaulike High School

*Suzanne Forbes*

[Suzanne Forbes \(Feb 12, 2026 05:45:13 HST\)](#)

Sue Forbes  
Kihei Elementary

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 3:47:44 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Allison J Tinnin	Testifying for Hawaii Department of Education	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Date: Friday February 13, 2026**

**Time: 1:05pm**

**Location: Conference Room CR 229 & Videoconference**

**Committee: EDN**

**Department: Hawaii Department of Education**

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions**

**TESTIFIER(S): Allison Tinnin**

**POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

**I am writing to express our opposition to SB 3334. While I understand the intent to reduce "administrative burdens," this bill fails to recognize the essential regional leadership that Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) provide, particularly for rural and underserved communities.**

**Our opposition is based on four critical concerns:**

**1. Erosion of the Tri-Level Leadership Framework**

**The CAS is not just an administrative layer; they are the vital conduit connecting individual school needs with state-level initiatives. Eliminating this position severs the communication link between the school and the Department of Education's central leadership. Without a CAS, our schools risk becoming "islands of operation," lacking a cohesive regional strategy or a direct line of advocacy at the state level.**

## **2. Request for Additional Clarity on the Replacement for CAS**

**Section 17 of the bill is vague as to how CAS duties would be reassigned. If the thought was to return to district superintendents, that would greatly increase the number of schools under the supervision of a smaller number of individuals, which will lead to systemic neglect and burnout.**

## **3. Improper Expansion of School Community Council (SCC) Authority**

**The bill proposes giving SCC evaluations a 50% weight in principal selection. We oppose this shift for the following reasons:**

- Union Contract Conflicts: This creates a "de facto" hiring power for SCCs that contradicts existing labor agreements.**
- Integrity of Evaluation: This shift bypasses the professional, merit-based evaluation currently facilitated by the CAS. We are concerned that, without regional oversight, the selection process could be easily disrupted by a small number of disgruntled individuals rather than focused on professional competence.**

## **4. Risk of "Honolulu-Centric" Governance**

**Removing regional leadership altogether threatens to centralize power entirely in Honolulu. For rural complexes like mine, Kohala Elementary, a centralized structure ignores our unique geographic, cultural, and socio-economic challenges. This bill risks creating a hyper-centralized system that lacks accountability to the specific communities it is meant to serve.**

**For these reasons, we urge the Committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain the regional leadership structure that ensures our schools, teachers, and students receive the specialized support they require. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.**

**Respectfully,**

**Allison Tinnin**

**Vice Principal, Kohala Elementary**

**Date:** Friday February 13, 2026  
**Time:** 1:05pm  
**Location:** Conference Room CR 229 &  
Videoconference  
**Committee:** EDN

**Department:** Hawaii Department of Education

**BILL:** SB 3334, Relating to Education Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**TESTIFIER(S):** Eddeille Thomas

**POSITION:** OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS

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

I am writing to express our opposition to SB 3334. While I understand the intent to reduce "administrative burdens," this bill fails to recognize the essential regional leadership that Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) provide—particularly for rural and underserved communities.

Our opposition is based on four critical concerns:

### **1. Erosion of the Tri-Level Leadership Framework**

The CAS is not merely an administrative layer; they are the vital conduit connecting individual school needs with state-level initiatives. Eliminating this position severs the communication link between Kohala Elementary School and the Department of Education's central leadership. Without a CAS, our schools risk becoming "islands of operation," lacking a cohesive regional strategy or a direct line of advocacy at the state level.

### **2. Request for Additional Clarity on the Replacement for CAS**

Section 17 of the bill is vague as to how CAS duties would be reassigned. If the thought was to return to district superintendents, that would greatly increase the number of schools under the supervision of a smaller number of individuals, which will lead to systemic neglect and burnout.

### **3. Improper Expansion of School Community Council (SCC) Authority**

The bill proposes giving SCC evaluations a 50% weight in principal selection. We oppose this shift for the following reasons:

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selection process could be easily disrupted by a small number of disgruntled individuals rather than focused on professional competence.

#### **4. Risk of "Honolulu-Centric" Governance**

Removing regional leadership altogether threatens to centralize power entirely in Honolulu. For rural schools like mine, Kohala Elementary, a centralized structure ignores our unique geographic, cultural, and socio-economic challenges. This bill risks creating a hyper-centralized system that lacks accountability to the specific communities it is meant to serve.

For these reasons, we urge the Committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain the regional leadership structure that ensures our schools, teachers, and students receive the specialized support they require. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Eddeille Thomas

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 7:53:25 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Garret S Zakahi	Testifying for Department of Education	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**February 12, 2026**

**Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair**

**Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair**

**Committee on Education**

**RE: SB 3334 - Relating to Education**

**Hearing date: February 13, 2026, at 1:05 PM**

**Aloha Chair Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the committee,**

**Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony and for your continued commitment to Hawai'i's students and public schools.**

**My name is Garret Zakahi, and for the past 12 school years, I have served as the Principal of President Thomas Jefferson Elementary School. I am respectfully submitting this written testimony in OPPOSITION of SB 3334 RELATING TO EDUCATION.**

**SB 3334 proposes changes to structures, already in place, that would negatively impact effective school leadership, operational stability, and instructional continuity. Within SB 3334, I am concerned about (I) the proposed elimination of the CAS position and (II) the restructuring of principal evaluations.**

**I. The Vital Role of Complex Area Superintendents (CAS)**

**In Hawai'i's unique single-district system, CAS positions are not "unnecessary administrative burdens"; they are the essential link between individual schools and the state-level Department of Education.**

- **Essential Oversight:** The CAS provides critical administrative and fiscal support and ensures compliance with State and Federal laws.
- **Crisis Management:** They offer vital, experience-based guidance in student management and crisis situations that principals cannot manage in isolation.
- **Consequences of Elimination:** Removing this layer of leadership would remove direct supervision for principals, increase fragmentation across Complex Areas, and shift unmanageable responsibilities onto principals whose plates are already overflowing.

## **II. Risks of Restructuring Principal Evaluations**

**SB 3334 proposes giving School Community Councils (SCC) a 50% weight in the evaluation and selection of principals. This raises grave concerns regarding governance and objectivity:**

- **Compromised Integrity:** Expanding SCC authority into personnel functions compromises the confidentiality and professional integrity of the hiring process.
- **Politicization of Leadership:** This shift risks politicizing leadership decisions rather than grounding them in instructional expertise.
- **Existing Frameworks:** We already have the Comprehensive Evaluation System for School Administrators (CESSA), which effectively evaluates principals based on student growth and leadership practices.

**The elimination of CAS positions combined with the restructuring of evaluation processes will weaken leadership pipelines and destabilize our schools—particularly those serving high-need communities.**

**For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Senate to defer SB 3334. I encourage the Senate to instead engage with stakeholders—school leaders, CAS, and educators—in a thoughtful dialogue to strengthen the leadership structures that already exist to better serve our students.**

**Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony and for your continued commitment to Hawai‘i’s students and public schools.**

**Mahalo for your consideration,**

**Garret Zakahi, Principal**

**President Thomas Jefferson Elementary School**

## Testimony in Opposition to SB 3334

Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my **strong opposition** to SB 3334, which seeks to eliminate the role of Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) within the Hawaii Department of Education (HIDOE). While the desire for administrative efficiency is understandable, removing this critical layer of leadership would destabilize our schools and disconnect state-level policy from classroom reality.

### The Essential Role of the Complex Area Superintendent

In Hawaii's unique statewide school district, the CAS serves as the vital bridge between the central state office and individual school communities. Eliminating this role would create a massive structural void for the following reasons:

- **Localized Advocacy:** Each complex area has distinct needs—from the rural challenges of Ka'ū to the urban density of Honolulu. A CAS ensures that state resources are tailored to these specific geographic and socioeconomic realities.
- **Direct Principal Support:** Principals are often the most isolated leaders in the system. The CAS acts as their primary supervisor, mentor, and coach, providing the professional development and accountability necessary to improve student outcomes.
- **Systemic Coherence:** The CAS ensures that "feeder" elementary and middle schools are aligned with their respective high schools. This vertical alignment is crucial for smooth student transitions and consistent curriculum standards.

### Potential Consequences of SB 3334

If this bill were to pass, the HIDOE would likely face:

1. **Administrative Bottlenecks:** Without the 15 CAS positions, the burden of supervising over 250 principals would fall directly on a handful of state-level executives, leading to slower response times and decreased oversight.
2. **Loss of Accountability:** The CAS is responsible for monitoring school performance. Removing them weakens the mechanism for identifying and intervening in struggling schools.
3. **Disconnected Policy:** State mandates would be issued without a localized intermediary to translate those mandates into actionable, site-specific plans.

## Conclusion

The Complex Area Superintendent is not "bureaucratic bloat"; it is the **backbone of the DOE's operational framework**. Stripping this layer away would isolate our principals and leave our students without a localized advocate at the system level.

I urge the Committee to **defer this measure** and instead focus on supporting the CAS role to further empower our schools.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 7:17:48 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jason Okamoto	Testifying for DOE	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**TO:** The Senate Committee on Education

**FROM:** Jason Okamoto, Principal, Mānoa Elementary School

**DATE:** February 12, 2026

Aloha Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jason Okamoto and I am the principal of Mānoa Elementary School. I am writing today to express my **opposition** to SB 3334. While I appreciate the legislature’s intent to streamline the education system, this bill introduces several changes that threaten the stability of school leadership and the quality of support provided to our students.

First, the proposition to repeal the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position and replace it with an undefined “administrative framework” is detrimental. For a principal, the CAS is not just an "administrative burden"; they are the primary point of contact for critical compliance, curriculum, and operational support. In our statewide system, the CAS plays a critical role in bridging the gap between important high-level state policies and school-level implementation and action.

Based on proposed SB 3334, the lack of clear support, in the form of an “appropriate authority” designated by later DOE rules, creates immediate uncertainty regarding who I, as a principal, should turn to for guidance on complex legal or instructional issues.

Additionally, SB 3334 mandates that an SCC's evaluation account for 50% of the overall evaluation used in the selection of a principal. While community input is vital, placing half of the hiring weight on a volunteer council—who may not be trained in professional educator standards or human resources—undermines the professional nature of school leadership.

This shift creates some additional risks, making the principalship a "popularity contest" rather than a selection based on proven instructional leadership and administrative expertise. Principals are already subject to rigorous professional accountability and must engage in continuous growth as a condition of their position. A selection process that weighs a lay-council's opinion equally with professional qualifications devalues the expertise required to run a school.

Finally, the bill removes the CAS from the appeal process when a principal and an SCC disagree. Instead of a local superintendent who understands the specific school's context, the appeal will now go to a designated "authority," then the Superintendent, and finally the Board. This adds layers of bureaucracy rather than removing them, potentially stalling important school-level decisions.

In conclusion, SB 3334 removes a vital layer of local support (the CAS) and replaces it with ambiguity while simultaneously destabilizing the professional standards for hiring and evaluating school leaders. For these reasons, I respectfully ask that you hold this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Jason Okamoto

SB 3334

Relating to elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

Hearing:

Friday, February 13, 2026

1:05pm

Position: Opposition and Comments

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

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 3334. I understand the intent of reducing the financial burden within the Department of Education (DOE); however, this bill fails to recognize the essential oversight, duties and responsibilities that our Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) provide on a regular basis to each and every public school in the DOE. Having been a CAS myself for eight years, I am writing this testimony from first hand experience.

The decision was made about 20 years ago to move from a statewide District model to a Complex Area model for reasons that were based on research and findings from around the nation. It was determined that school oversight was more effective when supervision and decision making was done closer to the school(s) level. In the Central District, that change in the model meant the District Deputy Superintendent who used to oversee 42 schools was changed to two Complex Area Superintendents who oversee 22 and 20 schools each. This allowed for each CAS to monitor, evaluate, support and guide each school with much more precision and allowed for more accurate diagnostic decision making based upon detailed data. It also allowed each CAS to work more closely with each principal which led to more differentiated support for both staff and school teams. This is a key part of our Tri-Level Leadership Framework.

Upon review of the bill, I do not see how the duties and responsibilities of the CAS would be carried out moving forward. Is it assumed that one individual District Superintendent would take on the duties that are now carried out by two CAS's? CAS's have much more detailed and thorough principal evaluations; CAS's have been conducting many more school visits and overseeing school accreditation processes; with the use of technology, the CAS's office reviews many more data points and student outcomes; CAS's participate in many more school and community programs and events; CAS's are also much more accessible to the parents and community which allow for more timely communication. This list would go on and on with the multitude of responsibilities the CAS office handles that is directly connected to supporting our public schools.

Lastly, I do not see how the School Community Council of each school would be able to accurately evaluate the needs of their school and strengths of principal candidates to make principal selections. Having sat on over 25 principal interviews I have seen admiral SCC members with great intentions provide input during principal interviews. They have provided great feedback and have shared critical insight of the needs of their school; however, very few truly understood the magnitude of the principal position. The scope, breadth and depth of knowledge and skills needed to be the principal of a school are tremendous and trying to find the right "fit" is also paramount when making such a selection. The CAS is responsible for overseeing and evaluating the school principal and the selection should continue to sit as a duty of the person responsible.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully,

Bob Davis

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

**From:** Reid Kuba, Ph.D.  
Jarrett Middle School Principal

**Date:** February 10, 2026

**Measure:** SB3334 - RELATING TO EDUCATION (Repeal of Complex Area Superintendents)

**Position:** OPPOSE

## **Negative Impact on Jarrett Middle School**

William P. Jarrett Middle School serves a diverse community with specific socioeconomic and academic needs. For schools like ours, this repeal removes the essential regional oversight that ensures our student needs are met within the larger Kaimukī-McKinley-Roosevelt (KMR) Complex Area.

The CAS provides several irreplaceable benefits to our school:

- **Vertical Alignment in the KMR Complex:** The CAS ensures that the transition for students from feeder elementary schools like Palolo, Ali'iolani, and Hokolani, into Jarrett Middle and eventually into Kaimukī High School is academically seamless. Without a CAS to coordinate curriculum and behavioral supports across these schools, Jarrett Middle becomes an island rather than part of a cohesive K-12 pipeline.
- **Direct Advocacy for Resources:** Jarrett relies on a CAS who understands its specific and unique needs. A statewide Assistant Superintendent or Superintendent in a central office cannot provide the same level of nuanced advocacy for Jarrett's socio-economic challenges, personnel, and student behavioral and academic needs.
- **Crisis Management & Local Oversight:** In a single-district system, the CAS is the "boots on the ground" for Jarrett Middle. Whether managing campus facilities issues or complex personnel matters, the CAS provides a level of responsiveness that a centralized state office cannot match.
- **Appointed Authority:** Authority cannot simply be shifted up to the state level or down to the school level. The CAS' authority supports a Principal's authority to make decisions at the school level which is best for our students. District level authority helps to prevent conflicts of interest that may arise during personnel and parental issues at the school level.

## **Conclusion**

Repealing the CAS position threatens to destabilize the regional support systems that schools like Jarrett Middle rely on for stability and growth. It is my deep concern that support for schools will disappear or become, at the least, distant. This ultimately has a negative impact on school level personnel and student learning.

**I respectfully urge the Committee to table SB3334.**

**Date:** Friday, February 13, 2026

**Time:** 1:05 pm

**Location:** Conference Room CR 229 & Videoconference

**Committee:** EDN

**Department:** Ka'ū-Kea'au-Pāhoa Complex Area

**BILL:** SB 3334, Relating to Education: Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**TESTIFIER:** 'Iwalani Harris

**POSITION:** STRONGEST OPPOSITION

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

My name is 'Iwalani Harris, and I am writing to express my strongest opposition to SB 3334. I speak today not just as a concerned educator, but as someone who has dedicated the last decade to serving our Hawaii Island complex area, first as a resource teacher and now as a District Educational Specialist.

Having served under two different Complex Area Superintendents (CAS), I have seen firsthand how indispensable this role is for our rural communities. My perspective is rooted in the following critical concerns:

- **Proven Crisis and Recovery Leadership:** During the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, I witnessed our CASs provide the steady, localized leadership necessary to support our students, families, teachers, and administrators. They were on the ground with us, ensuring that our rural schools were not forgotten and that every child had what they needed to continue learning. SB 3334 threatens to eliminate the very leadership that guided us through our most difficult times.
- **Protection of Rural Communities:** As a District Educational Specialist, I know that our geographic, cultural, and socio-economic challenges are unique. Centralizing power in Honolulu ignores the realities of life in rural Hawaii. The CAS serves as our direct line of advocacy; without them, our schools risk becoming isolated "islands of operation" without a cohesive regional strategy or a voice at the state level. Would you eliminate the Mayors of each island? Even having one Mayor for this island is a HUGE responsibility. The same goes for the Complex Area Superintendent!
- **Preservation of the Tri-Level Leadership Framework:** The CAS is the vital conduit between individual school needs and state initiatives. Eliminating this position severs the communication link between the "schoolhouse" and the Department of Education's central leadership. This bill fails to provide any clear or viable replacement for these duties, risking systemic neglect and burnout for those left to pick up the pieces. Those left would be the Resource Teachers and District Educational Specialists who provide support for priority areas like reading, math, social-emotional learning, etc. The CAS helps us navigate and provides us guidance like a captain (kapena) of the canoe (wa'a).

- **Integrity of Professional Evaluation:** I am deeply concerned by the proposal to give School Community Councils (SCC) 50% weight in principal selection. My decade of experience has shown that the merit-based, professional evaluation currently facilitated by the CAS is essential for maintaining school integrity. Moving away from this model risks allowing the selection process to be disrupted by personal grievances rather than professional competence. The CAS meets with parents, community members, educators, and students. Will those one-on-one meetings be done by the School Community Council chair?

For ten years, I have worked alongside our Complex Area Superintendents to ensure our schools receive the specialized support they require. I have served as a Vice Principal, Curriculum Coordinator, and a Classroom Teacher for twenty-five years prior, and I have been given guidance at the school level from the Complex Area Superintendent. I urge this Committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain the regional leadership structure that is vital to the success of our students and our community.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

'Iwalani Harris

District Educational Specialist

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 8:34:13 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Richard Billingsley	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my firm opposition to SB 3334. While the bill intends to streamline operations, the proposed elimination of the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position will inadvertently create a leadership vacuum. Rather than reducing burden, this move distances our schools from the localized support they require.

In Hawaii’s unique single-district system, the CAS is not an administrative redundancy; it is a critical localized hub. Without this role, the Department of Education risks becoming a detached, central bureaucracy. CASs possess a deep understanding of the socio-economic and cultural needs of their specific complexes, serving as an essential bridge between state policy and school-level execution. Removing this layer forces principals to report to an already overextended central office, while simultaneously creating a bottleneck for student discipline and school community appeals.

Efficiency should not come at the cost of local accountability. I urge the committee to defer SB 3334 and focus instead on empowering the CAS role to better serve our schools.

January 11, 2026

## **Testimony in Opposition to S.B. NO. 6334**

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Section 2 of S.B. NO. 6334, which proposes the repeal of the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position within the Department of Education. The removal of this critical role would significantly undermine the effectiveness of the Hawaii public school system and negatively affect the quality of education provided to Hawaii's students.

I have worked with Complex Area Superintendents since 2003, and during this time my experience has been that Complex Area Superintendents are vital to the DOE system. They take personal responsibility in the progress of their schools, know their principals and their needs intimately, and work tirelessly to ensure that Hawaii's students receive the best education possible. The Complex Area Superintendents I have worked with, which include complexes on every island, have a strong understanding of the role of the principal and the challenges they face and so are able to use this knowledge when coaching and supervising their complex principals.

Complex Area Superintendents play a vital role in bridging the gap between the State Department of Education's vision and the unique needs of local communities. Their proximity to schools allows them to have a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities within their respective areas. This local insight is essential for tailoring state policies to meet the specific needs of students, teachers, and families in each community while keeping the integrity of the policies.

Furthermore, Complex Area Superintendents ensure that the HIDOE expectations are met across schools. They provide direct oversight and support to principals and educators, helping to implement statewide educational goals while addressing the unique circumstances of each school. Their presence ensures accountability and consistency in the delivery of quality education, and in my experience they are present. The Complex Area Superintendents I have worked with live their job; they are available at all hours of the day and night and their weekends are often filled with school and DOE activities.

One of the most critical functions of Complex Area Superintendents is their ability to address issues and concerns in a prompt and effective manner. By being engaged with the schools, they can respond quickly to challenges, whether they involve student safety, academic performance, or operational matters. Removing this layer of leadership would

create a gap in oversight and problem-solving, leaving schools and communities without the immediate support they need to thrive.

While the bill suggests that the Department of Education can reassign the duties of Complex Area Superintendents, this approach risks overburdening other administrators and diluting the focus on individual school needs. The proposed changes could lead to delays in decision-making and a lack of accountability, harming the students and communities the DOE is meant to serve.

In conclusion, I believe the Complex Area Superintendent position is an essential part of Hawaii's public education system. Their role ensures that the DOE's vision is realized at the local level, high standards are upheld across schools, and issues are addressed promptly and effectively. I urge the committee to amend Section 2 of S.B. NO. 6334 and preserve this critical layer of leadership and oversight.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important matter.

Sincerely,

*Babette Moreno*

Babette Moreno, Ed.D.

Straight A Solutions, LLC

281.384.4568

[babette@straightasolutions.com](mailto:babette@straightasolutions.com)

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 9:29:47 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christopher D. Yim	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate,

My name is Babā Yim, and I am the Po‘okumu of Ke Kula Kaiapuni ‘O Ānuenuē, the only K-12 Kula Kaiapuni (Regular DOE Hawaiian Immersion School) on O‘ahu. I submit this testimony in strong opposition to Senate Bill 3334.

I have served the DOE in the Hawaiian Immersion Program for the past 22 years, 10 of which have been as an administrator. While I value shared decision-making and community engagement, SB3334 proposes changes that would significantly and negatively impact effective school leadership, operational stability, and instructional continuity. Specifically, I am concerned about (1) the elimination of CAS positions and (2) proposed changes to principal evaluation and hiring procedures requiring School Community Council (SCC) involvement.

1. Elimination of CAS Positions

Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) play a critical and irreplaceable role in Hawai‘i’s uniquely centralized school system. CAS serve as the essential link between schools and the state-level DOE, providing instructional leadership, compliance guidance, and timely decision-making support.

Eliminating CAS positions would:

1. Remove a vital layer of instructional and operational leadership support for principals.
2. Increase fragmentation and inconsistencies across schools and complex areas.
3. Shift additional responsibilities to principals without corresponding capacity or authority.
4. Undermine systemwide coherence in implementation of state and federal mandates.

From a principal’s perspective, CAS are not redundant—they are essential partners in school improvement, crisis response, personnel guidance, and accountability. Their removal would weaken—not strengthen—school leadership and student support structures. Especially as a Kaiapuni Administrator, our school would not get the specific supports we need to effectively engage with DOE processes and initiatives, while still maintaining the integrity of the Hawaiian Immersion Program.

2. Changes to Principal Evaluation and Hiring Procedures

SB3334's proposal to require School Community Council (SCC) involvement in principal evaluation and hiring raises serious concerns related to governance, objectivity, confidentiality, and equity.

While SCCs play an important advisory role, expanding their authority into evaluation and hiring functions would:

- Compromise the professional integrity and confidentiality of personnel processes.
- Introduce inconsistencies across schools due to varying SCC capacity, training, and composition.
- Risk politicizing leadership decisions rather than grounding them in instructional leadership expertise.
- Blur accountability lines within a centralized statewide system.

Principals are evaluated and hired within a framework that balances instructional leadership, compliance, labor agreements, and systemwide priorities. These processes require trained evaluators with a comprehensive understanding of educational leadership standards, legal requirements, and DOE expectations. SCCs are not designed, trained, or resourced for this role.

#### Conclusion

SB3334, will have harmful consequences for school leadership, system coherence, and ultimately student learning. The elimination of CAS positions and the restructuring of principal evaluation and hiring processes would weaken leadership pipelines and destabilize schools—particularly those serving high-need communities and especially Kaiapuni Schools.

I urge the Senate to reject SB3334 and instead engage principals, CAS, educators, and community stakeholders in thoughtful dialogue to strengthen—not dismantle—effective leadership structures within the Hawai'i State Department of Education.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony and for your continued commitment to Hawai'i's students and public schools.

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 9:32:43 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Emily Willis	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 3334. Having seen the impact of a Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) firsthand, I believe this role is indispensable to the health of our schools.

In a district as large and diverse as ours, a "one-size-fits-all" approach from a centralized office often fails to meet the specific needs of our students. The CAS structure provides local accountability and targeted community support.

I urge you to vote **NO** on SB 3334.

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to **SB3334**, which seeks to eliminate the position of Complex Area Superintendent (CAS). While the intent to "streamline" administration is noted, this measure poses a severe risk to Hawaii's ability to meet federal mandates under the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**.

**1. Disruption of the LEA Governance Structure** Hawaii is unique because the HIDOE functions as both the SEA and the LEA. In this structure, the CAS serves as the critical "middle tier" responsible for the direct oversight of LEA duties. Federal law requires the LEA to ensure that a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) is provided to every student with a disability. By removing the CAS, the state is effectively decapitating the regional administrative layer that ensures individual schools are following Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and federal timelines.

**2. High-Stakes Compliance and Discipline (Chapter 19)** Under current Hawaii Administrative Rules (Chapter 19), a CAS must approve any student suspension exceeding 10 days. For students with disabilities, these removals trigger a "Manifestation Determination Review" (MDR). Without a CAS, there is no regional authority to provide the objective, legally mandated oversight for these high-stakes decisions. Shifting this burden directly to the State Superintendent's office will lead to administrative bottlenecks, procedural errors, and inevitable federal lawsuits.

**3. The Monitoring and Compliance Gap** The HIDOE Monitoring and Compliance Branch relies on the "Tri-Level" empowerment model (State, Complex, School).

As illustrated above, the Complex Area level is the only tier with the proximity to schools to provide timely technical assistance for IDEA compliance while maintaining the authority to hold principals accountable. Centralizing this power at the SEA level (Queen Liliuokalani Building) removes the "local" from Local Education Agency, making it nearly impossible to monitor 250+ schools effectively.

**Conclusion** Eliminating the CAS position without a robust, federally compliant alternative for LEA oversight invites legal challenges from the U.S. Department of Education and risks the loss of federal funding. I urge you to vote **NO** on SB3334 to protect the rights of our most vulnerable students. Thank you for the opportunity to voice my concern and thank you for supporting the education of the students of Hawaii.

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:05:55 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Bob Morikuni	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Whom It May Concern,

I would like to write to oppose the elimination of the Complex Area Superintedents (CAS). As currently there are so many more schools in the State of Hawaii that we need the help and support of the CAS to meet the needs for the schools within their Complex Areas. Eliminating them would possibly more work for districts to take on more schools and would possibly mean less attention and help to individual schools. The current system with the CAS, is working well as the help and attention we receive is needed, timely and perfect for our school and I believe the State of Hawaii.

Thank you for time,

Bob Morikuni

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:25:00 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Samantha Tomori	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Samantha Tomori, and I serve as a Resource Teacher within the Ka‘ū-Kea‘au-Pāhoā (KKP) Complex Area. I am writing to express my **strong opposition to SB 3334**, which proposes the elimination of the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position.

As an educator in one of the most geographically vast and socio-economically diverse regions in Hawai‘i, I believe this bill would fundamentally destabilize the support systems our students and teachers rely on. The KKP Complex Area faces unique challenges—from volcanic activity and rural isolation to the vast distances between our schools. Centralizing oversight in Honolulu is not just inefficient, it is a step backward for equity.

- **Localized Crisis Management:** During times of crisis—be it a pandemic or natural disasters like the Kīlauea eruptions—our CAS provides the dynamic leadership that a central office 200 miles away simply cannot. They understand our roads, our weather, and most importantly, our families.
- **The Steersman of the Wa‘a:** As a Resource Teacher, I specialize in areas like data-driven dialogue and facilitating school improvement alongside other resource teachers specializing in other programs. Without a CAS to provide a cohesive regional vision, our work becomes fragmented, as it would in any complex organization. The CAS acts as the steersman of our wa‘a, ensuring that all schools in our district are paddling in the same direction toward student success.
- **A Shield for Rural Equity:** Without a CAS, our rural schools risk becoming overlooked when resources are being distributed. Eliminating them is akin to removing the Mayor’s office and expecting a city to run itself from another island.

SB 3334 also proposes giving School Community Councils (SCC) 50% weight in principal selection. While community input is vital, principal ship is a highly technical, professional role.

- **Professional Integrity:** The CAS ensures that principal selection remains merit-based and free from the "small-town politics" or personal grievances that can sometimes influence local committees.
- **Capacity:** Our SCC volunteers are dedicated, but they are not trained in professional educator evaluation. Shifting this massive responsibility away from a qualified CAS risks the long-term stability of school leadership.

In my years of service—from the classroom to my current role supporting teachers across the complex area—I have seen that the most effective leadership is that which is closest to the students. SB 3334 severs the vital link between our schools and the Department of Education’s leadership.

I respectfully urge this committee to **vote against SB 3334** and protect the regional leadership structure that allows our rural Hawai‘i Island communities to thrive.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Samantha Tomori

## Testimony in Opposition to SB 3334

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Debby Ng, and I serve as a Complex Academic Officer within a Complex Area that supports nine public schools in a high-need community. I respectfully submit testimony in **OPPOSITION** to SB 3334.

The proposed elimination of the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position would significantly destabilize the support structure that schools rely upon daily. The CAS role is not redundant administration; it is essential instructional and operational leadership that ensures alignment, accountability, and coordinated support across schools.

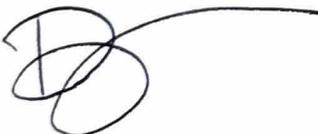
Within our Complex Area, we provide direct coaching cycles for principals, structured mentoring and induction support for a high number of beginning teachers, ongoing professional development for counselors and academic coaches, data analysis and improvement planning, and coordinated assistance for schools experiencing high staff turnover.

Our community faces persistent challenges, including elevated staff turnover and a substantial population of early-career educators who require sustained mentoring and oversight. The CAS ensures that these supports are strategically aligned and equitably delivered. Removing this role would shift significant administrative and leadership responsibilities onto individual principals, many of whom are already managing complex instructional, compliance, and community demands.

In high-need communities, coherence matters. Stability matters. The CAS provides continuity of vision, coordinated accountability, and responsive leadership that bridges state-level direction with school-level realities. Eliminating this position risks fragmentation and inequitable implementation of state initiatives.

I respectfully urge the Committee to HOLD SB 3334 and carefully examine the long-term impact on underserved schools and the students they serve.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



Deborah Ng  
Nanakuli/Waianae Complex Area  
Kapolei, HI 96707  
8085514225  
[deborah.ng@k12.hi.us](mailto:deborah.ng@k12.hi.us)

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:52:39 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Disa Hauge	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Disa Hauge, and I serve as the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) in Nānākuli-Wai‘anae (NW). As you know, NW has the largest population of Hawaiians in the world and is considered a historically underserved community. I respectfully submit testimony in OPPOSITION to SB 3334.

The proposed elimination of the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position would devastate a proven system of support specifically designed for high-need communities like ours. Unlike district-based models serving 50+ schools across diverse contexts, our Complex Area structure allows intensive, culturally responsive, and relationship-driven support tailored to the unique challenges facing our nine schools.

Our community requires a different level of support than a one-size-fits-all district model can provide. We face compounding challenges: elevated staff turnover, a substantial proportion of new teachers requiring sustained mentoring, deep poverty affecting student access to school and medical/mental health services, and the critical need for culturally sustaining practices that honor our predominantly Native Hawaiian student population. A CAS overseeing 50+ schools across varied communities cannot provide the depth of engagement and support our schools require.

Our complex area has a single focus: being a system of support to its schools. Towards that end, we have data dashboards that track schools’ progress on everything from attendance to academic progress to compliance with special education. All teachers are observed three times a year by the complex and that data, along with principals’ biweekly teacher observations and common complex-wide student assessment data, is analyzed with principals & their school instructional coaches in order to best serve our kids. Every principal has an EO support person and I meet with all principals monthly in a coaching cycle. We have an EO who supports the community school model and an EO who supports Ola Moku (Thriving Community) in which all teachers are supported with resources to teach our students the ‘ike and mo’olelo of our community within the HA framework.

This intensive support works. Under our current CAS structure, four of the six schools identified as Comprehensive Support & Improvement under federal guidelines have successfully exited that status—a testament to the hard work of our educators and the coordinated, sustained system of support the Complex Area structure enables.

Consolidating oversight to a district level serving 50+ schools would severely dilute this focused support, eliminate the cultural and contextual expertise our CAS provides, and burden individual principals—many already managing extreme complexity—with responsibilities they cannot shoulder alone.

In high-need, high-Hawaiian communities, coherence matters. Cultural responsiveness matters. Intensive, relationship-based support matters. Our CAS structure provides continuity of vision, coordinated accountability, and responsive leadership grounded in deep knowledge of our community's strengths and needs. Eliminating this position risks dismantling a structure that is demonstrably improving outcomes for our most underserved students.

I respectfully urge the Committee to HOLD SB 3334 and carefully examine its potentially devastating impact on communities like Nānākuli-Wai‘anae, where students deserve—and are succeeding because of—a complex-level system built for their specific needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

*My name is Eleanor Gonsalves, and I am the Principal of Royal School.*

*I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 3334. While the bill's stated intent is to reduce administrative burden and clarify authority, the proposed elimination of the CAS position and the restructuring of principal selection processes will have the opposite effect: it will create a leadership hierarchy that will make it difficult for schools to receive the immediate support when it is needed.*

*The CAS position is not an "unnecessary administrative burden"; it is a vital localized leadership hub. Hawaii has a unique single-district system. Without the CAS, the Department of Education becomes a massive, distant bureaucracy.*

*CASs understand the specific socio-economic and cultural nuances of their specific complexes. They serve as a critical liaison, translating high-level state policy into actionable school-level strategies.*

*Under current law, the CAS is the first line of appeal for school community councils and student discipline. Removing this local oversight will lead to a bottleneck of appeals at the State Superintendent's office, delaying justice for students and parents. Much will go by the waste side waiting for answers and support.*

*I urge the committee to defer SB 3334 and instead build conversations within the Department on effective leadership structures within the DOE.*

Date: Friday, February 13, 2026

Time: 1:05 pm

Location: Conference Room CR 229 & Videoconference

Committee: EDN

Department: Ka'ū-Kea'au-Pāhoa Complex Area

BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education: Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

TESTIFIER: Wilma Roddy

POSITION: STRONG OPPOSITION

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

I'm Wilma Roddy, and I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 3334, which seeks to repeal the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position.

This measure would dismantle the most effective bridge between our rural communities and the state government. Removing this layer of leadership would create a massive structural void, destabilize school support systems, and centralize power in a way that detaches leadership from the unique needs of our diverse communities. In our district, Ka'ū-Kea'au-Pāhoa (KKP) Complex Area, our CAS is the frontline of support.

I currently serve as a Complex Academic Officer (CAO) in KKP, prior to that I served as Principal for 9 years and Vice Principal for 5 years. I had the privilege of working alongside two amazing Complex Area Superintendents whose leadership provides a level of support, stability and localized expertise that ensures our rural schools are never overlooked by a centralized state office that is miles away from our daily realities.

- **Crisis Response:** During the eruptions of Kilauea in 2014 and 2018, our CAS was able to seamlessly coordinate school closures and relocations, ensuring that the education of displaced students continued without interruption while prioritizing the physical safety of our staff and families. Maintaining a local CAS ensures our principals have immediate, synchronous access to leadership that possesses an intimate understanding of our geography and infrastructure, allowing for swift, informed decision-making that keeps our schools running safely.
- **Addressing the Teacher Shortage:** Our CAS has shown exceptional initiative in addressing our unique staffing challenges by spearheading the 'Homegrown Job Fair' for

KKP. This is a visionary initiative that empowers our own residents to become educators. This strategy not only addresses staffing needs but ensures our teachers are deeply invested in the long-term success of the community they call home.

- **Empowering Student Voice:** Another standout achievement is the establishment of the KKP CAS Student Advisory Council. This platform does more than just open a line of communication; it cultivates the next generation of local leaders by ensuring that students from Kea‘au to Ka‘ū have a seat at the table. By engaging directly with leadership on critical issues like transportation and campus safety, our students see firsthand that their lived experiences can drive meaningful policy changes in their own backyard.

### **Structural Concerns with SB 3334**

- **Impossible Span of Control:** Repealing 15 CAS positions would require the State Superintendent to directly oversee over 250 principals. This is a management impossibility that will lead to massive delays in school-level approvals, hiring, and disciplinary actions.
- **Politicization of Principal Selection:** Keeping principal appointments and evaluations at the complex level ensures that our leaders are selected and supported through a specialized, pedagogical lens. The CAS acts as a champion for school excellence, ensuring that every principal is equipped with the specific skills and professional support necessary to meet the unique academic goals of our Ka‘ū-Kea‘au-Pāhoa families.

The CAS position is the vital link that keeps our schools connected and cared for. Their leadership is rooted in a genuine commitment to our students and staff, making sure that our rural challenges are met with real, local solutions. Removing this role would leave our schools without their strongest advocate. I ask you to value the people behind the numbers and maintain this essential position for the sake of our community.

I respectfully urge the Committee to hold SB 3334.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Wilma Roddy

Complex Academic Officer

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:53:41 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Matthew Crowell	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my sincere concern and strong opposition to SB 3334. As a Resource Teacher in the Nānākuli-Wai‘anae Complex Area and a former teacher at Wai‘anae High School, I have experienced firsthand the vital impact of the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS).

By providing strong leadership and clear direction, the Complex Area Superintendent has been instrumental in ensuring both vertical and horizontal alignment across the schools in our district. With their leadership, we have been able to build robust networks for school leader and teacher collaboration and cultivate a new generation of instructional leaders.

Losing this role would have a significant negative impact on the health and stability of the schools in Nānākuli-Wai‘anae. In a community as large and unique as ours, attempting a centralized "one-size-fits-all" approach will fail to meet the specialized needs of our students. Having a local CAS not only ensures direct accountability but also provides the targeted, community-specific support that our students deserve.

I strongly urge you to vote **NO** on SB 3334.

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 12:25:41 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Johnpaul F Lapid	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Written Testimony for SB 3334 Public Hearing**

**Date:** Friday, February 13

**Submitted by:** Johnpaul Lapid, Senior Research Associate, WestEd

**Position:** Opposing

**Statement:** I strongly oppose SB 3334. As a Senior Research Associate with WestEd, I know firsthand that the Curriculum and Assessment Specialist (CAS) is essential to our schools' success. This role drives curriculum integrity, supports teachers, and ensures students' learning needs are addressed. Removing or weakening the CAS position would create confusion in curriculum implementation, increase burdens on staff, and reduce the quality of education for our students.

**Request:** I urge the Committee to hold this bill and reconsider its detrimental impact. The CAS is pivotal to educational excellence and equity.

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 12:00:38 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Samarra B Lehman	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- **This bill proposed will create a massive burden on the DOE and school administrators**

**As a Complex Area teacher I serve the community of Nanakuli-Waianae. The impact of support that will be given as the school level will cause significant damage. Wish i had time to write more but please consider the price it will be pay on our community.**

**Date:** Friday February 13, 2026

**Time:** 1:05pm

**Location:** Conference Room CR 229 &  
Videoconference

**Committee:** EDN

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education** Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**TESTIFIER(S): Rory Souza, Rachelle Matsumura, and Felicia Friend Linton**

**POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

We are writing to express our opposition to SB 3334. While we understand the intent to reduce "administrative burdens," this bill fails to recognize the essential regional leadership that Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) provide—particularly for rural and underserved communities.

Our opposition is based on four critical concerns:

**1. Erosion of the Tri-Level Leadership Framework**

The CAS is not merely an administrative layer; they are the vital conduit connecting individual school needs with state-level initiatives. Eliminating this position severs the communication link between the "schoolhouse" and the Department of Education's central leadership. Without a CAS, our schools risk becoming "islands of operation," lacking a cohesive regional strategy or a direct line of advocacy at the state level.

**2. Request for Additional Clarity on the Replacement for CAS**

Section 17 of the bill is vague as to how CAS duties would be reassigned. If the thought was to return to district superintendents, that would greatly increase the number of schools under the supervision of a smaller number of individuals, which will lead to systemic neglect and burnout.

**3. Improper Expansion of School Community Council (SCC) Authority**

The bill proposes giving SCC evaluations a 50% weight in principal selection. We oppose this shift for the following reasons:

- **Union Contract Conflicts:** This creates a "de facto" hiring power for SCCs that contradicts existing labor agreements.
- **Integrity of Evaluation:** This shift bypasses the professional, merit-based evaluation currently facilitated by the CAS. We are concerned that, without regional oversight, the selection process could be easily disrupted by a small number of disgruntled individuals rather than focused on professional competence.

#### **4. Risk of "Honolulu-Centric" Governance**

Removing regional leadership altogether threatens to centralize power entirely in Honolulu. For rural complexes like Nanakuli-Waianae and for our colleagues on the Neighbor Islands, a centralized structure ignores our unique geographic, cultural, and socio-economic challenges. This bill risks creating a hyper-centralized system that lacks accountability to the specific communities it is meant to serve.

For these reasons, we urge the Committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain the regional leadership structure that ensures our schools, teachers, and students receive the specialized support they require. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

*Roty Souza*

*Rachelle Matsumura*

*Felicia Friend Linton*

**(e-signatures)**

Person testifying:                   Evangeline G. Casinas

Date:                                   February 11, 2026

Title of Bill:                         SB 3334 RELATING TO EDUCATION

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 3334. This bill proposes to eliminate the role of the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position within the Hawaii State Department of Education.

Hawai'i is unique as a single, unified statewide school district. The CAS serves as the essential "bridge" between the state Superintendent and individual campuses. Without this role, the central office would be physically and operationally detached from the specific needs of our diverse island communities.

While the goal of streamlining administration is understandable, the elimination of the CAS position would create a severe bottleneck at the top level. School principals require prompt, decisive support for personnel issues, crisis response, and student safety. A single Superintendent cannot provide over 250 principals with the immediate, high-level attention that a dedicated CAS offers. SB 3334 repeatedly replaces the CAS with the term "appropriate authority as designed by the department by rule." This creates uncertainty for principals who need to know exactly who to call.

Beyond crisis management, the CAS ensures operational stability by:

- Translating the Department's strategic plan into actionable complex area goals.
- Providing timely approvals and critical feedback on school-level decisions.
- Building leadership capacity and maintaining a localized system of support.

The CAS role is a middle layer lifeline of support for our school leaders, families, and students. Deleting this role from the law before a clear replacement is in place will lead to confusion and neglect at the campus level. We should be strengthening the support for our principals and schools, not removing it.

Respectfully, I ask the committee to oppose SB 3334.

**TO:** Senate Committee on Education  
**FROM:** Karla Fernandez  
**RE:** SB 3334 – Strong Opposition  
**HEARING DATE:** Friday, February 13, 2026

To the Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee:

I am writing as a concerned citizen to express my **strong opposition to SB 3334**, specifically the provision seeking to repeal the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position. The proposal to eliminate this role reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of how vital this position is to the health, safety, and academic success of our schools and students. Having witnessed the impact of this role firsthand, I believe removing this layer of leadership would create a vacuum that would leave our principals, teachers, and students unsupported and our communities disconnected from the Department of Education's leadership.

I would like to highlight the Nānākuli-Wai'anae Complex Area as a prime example of why this role must remain. I have the privilege to work alongside the Nānākuli-Wai'anae CAS as the School Renewal Specialist, and to be able to witness the impact her role has had on our student achievement and safety. The CAS in our Complex Area embodies the servant leader model. This position is not merely administrative; it is a critical coaching and mentorship role that requires a broad depth of knowledge. Our current CAS brings an invaluable wealth of experience from having served as a teacher and principal at both the elementary and secondary levels. This background is irreplaceable when it comes to coaching current principals through the unique, multi-level challenges of school leadership. I have personally seen how our principals rely on and trust the CAS's judgment because they know it is rooted in real-world experience.

Furthermore, the CAS is responsible for establishing the essential systems and structures that keep our children safe and ensure a consistent learning environment throughout all of our schools. Without this dedicated oversight, schools would be forced to navigate state requirements in isolation. In our community, the CAS is a visible, active presence who understands the specific struggles our students and teachers face. Our CAS's deep determination to see our students thrive is evident in her daily work responding to school needs. This level of local involvement and high visibility creates a bridge of trust between the community and the schools that cannot be replicated by a one distant, centralized office.

Removing the CAS would sever the most important link between the state's educational goals and the actual implementation of those goals in our classrooms. We need more hands-on leadership and mentorship for our educators, not less. I strongly urge the committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain the Complex Area Superintendent position to ensure our schools, principals, and students continue to have the support they deserve.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify,

Karla Fernandez

## TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Date:** Friday, February 13, 2026 **Time:** 1:05 PM **Location:** Conference Room 229 & Videoconference **Bill:** SB 3334, Relating to Education (Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions)

**To:** Chair Justin Woodson, Vice Chair Trish La Chica, and Members of the Committee: *(Note: I updated the Chair/Vice Chair to the current House EDN leadership, as "Mercado Kim/Kidani" are the Senate leadership names from your draft.)*

**Testifier:** Anna Barnes **Position:** **STRONGLY OPPOSE**

**Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee:**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am writing to express my **strong opposition** to SB 3334. While the stated intent of this measure is to reduce "administrative burdens," the actual result would be the dismantling of a vital regional leadership structure that ensures our schools—particularly those in rural and underserved communities—are not left to navigate complex state mandates alone.

Our opposition is based on four critical concerns:

### 1. Erosion of the Tri-Level Leadership Framework

The Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) is not merely an administrative "middleman." They are the essential conduit connecting individual school needs with state-level initiatives. Eliminating this position severs the communication link between the schoolhouse and the Department of Education's central leadership. Without a CAS, our schools risk becoming "islands of operation," deprived of a cohesive regional strategy or a direct line of advocacy at the state level.

### 2. Inadequate Framework for Reassignment of Duties

Section 17 of this bill is dangerously vague regarding the reassignment of CAS duties. If the intent is to return to a District Superintendent model, we are concerned this would exponentially increase the number of schools under the supervision of a single individual. This shift would inevitably lead to systemic oversight gaps, slower response times for school emergencies, and leadership burnout.

### 3. Compromising the Integrity of Principal Selection

The proposal to give School Community Council (SCC) evaluations a 50% weight in principal selection is highly problematic:

- **Labor Agreement Conflicts:** This creates a *de facto* hiring power for SCCs that likely contradicts existing collective bargaining agreements.
- **Politicization of Hiring:** The CAS currently provides a professional, merit-based evaluation of leadership. Shifting this power to a 50% SCC weight risks allowing the selection process to be influenced by personal agendas or a small number of vocal individuals rather than objective professional competence.

#### 4. The Danger of "Honolulu-Centric" Governance

Removing regional leadership threatens to centralize power entirely within the Queen Lili'uokalani Building. For rural complexes like Nānākuli-Waianae and for our Neighbor Island colleagues, a centralized structure ignores our unique geographic, cultural, and socio-economic challenges. This bill risks creating a hyper-centralized system that lacks meaningful accountability to the specific communities it is meant to serve.

**Closing** Regional leadership is the backbone of school support. Rather than eliminating these positions, we should be strengthening the CAS's ability to empower local schools. For these reasons, I urge the Committee to **HOLD SB 3334**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Anna Barnes  
Vice Principal  
Holualoa School

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 1:56:05 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kristin Muramoto	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Date: Friday February 13, 2026

Time: 1:05pm

Location: Conference Room CR 229 & Videoconference

Committee: EDN

Department: Holualoa Elementary School

BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

TESTIFIER(S): Kristin Muramoto

POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS

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

I am writing to express strong opposition to SB 3334. While I understand the intent to reduce "administrative burdens," this proposed bill overlooks the critical regional oversight provided by Complex Area Superintendents (CAS), which is vital for rural and underserved populations

Our opposition is based on four critical concerns:

**Dismantling the Tri-Level Leadership Structure:** The Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) is not merely an administrative layer; they are the essential bridge connecting individual school needs with state-level initiatives. Eliminating this position dismantles the Tri-Level Leadership Framework, severing the link between the schoolhouse and the Department of Education. Without a CAS, schools risk operating in silos, devoid of a cohesive regional strategy or direct advocacy at the state level-leaving schools isolated—'islands of operation' without strategic direction or a voice at the table. We cannot afford to lose this direct line of advocacy

Request for Additional Clarity on the Replacement for CAS: Section 17 creates significant uncertainty by failing to specify how CAS duties will be reassigned. If the intent is to revert to a District Superintendent model, such a structure is unsustainable and creates a high risk of systemic neglect and leadership burnout.

Improper Expansion of School Community Council (SCC) Authority: The bill proposes giving SCC evaluations a 50% weight in principal selection. We oppose this shift for the following reasons:

- Collective Bargaining Conflicts: This provision grants SCCs significant leverage that amounts to "de facto" hiring authority, directly conflicting with established labor agreements and union contracts.
- Compromised Evaluation Integrity: This shift sidesteps the professional, merit-based assessment currently provided by the CAS. Without that layer of professional regional oversight, the selection process becomes vulnerable to local politics, allowing personnel decisions to be driven by personal grievances rather than professional competence.

Implications of Over-Centralizing Authority: Removing regional leadership concentrates authority solely in Honolulu, to the detriment of rural complexes like the Neighbor Islands. Such centralization disregards distinct geographic, cultural, and socio-economic realities, resulting in a governance structure that lacks responsiveness and accountability to the specific communities it serves.

For these reasons, we strongly urge the Committee to hold SB 3334. We must preserve the regional infrastructure that guarantees our schools, educators, and students receive the specific attention they deserve. Mahalo for your consideration.

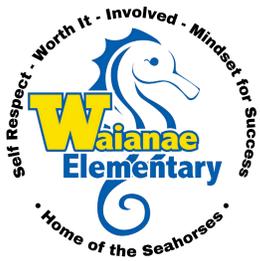
Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kristin Muramoto', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Kristin Muramoto, Ed.D.

Principal

Holualoa Elementary



## Wai'anae Elementary School

85-220 McArthur St  
Wai'anae, Hawaii 96792  
Office 808-305-2900  
Fax 808-697-7090

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February 11, 2026

Aloha Hawai'i Senate Education Committee,

I would like to submit the following testimony in opposition to SB 3334. I oppose SB 3334. While I understand the desire for administrative efficiency, this bill, as currently drafted, threatens the stability of our schools, the clarity of our leadership tri-level (School, Complex, State), and the equity of representation for rural and non-Honolulu-centric communities.

Official Stance: OPPOSITION

### Key Concerns and Commentary

1. Erosion of the Tri-Level Leadership Framework: The Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) is not merely an administrative layer; it is the essential conduit connecting individual school needs with state-level initiatives. Eliminating this position severs the vital communication link between the schoolhouse and the Queen Lili'uokalani Building. Without a CAS, our schools risk becoming islands of operation without a cohesive regional strategy or a direct line of advocacy at the state level.
2. Contradictory and Vague Language: I find the language in SB3334 inherently contradictory and vague. The bill acknowledges that CASs are a "vital support system," yet simultaneously seeks to eliminate them. Furthermore, the proposal to "utilize its administrative framework" as a replacement is dangerously vague.
3. Lack of Vision: There is no provided visual or organizational chart detailing what replaces the CAS.
4. Historical Precedent: If the intent is to return to the District Superintendent model, we must note that this model failed in the past. Expecting two District Superintendents to manage 42+ schools (not including the proposed new schools planned for ongoing residential development) in the Leeward District is a logistical impossibility that will lead to burnout and systemic neglect.

Concerns Regarding School Community Council (SCC) Authority: Section 11 of the bill proposes granting SCCs a 50% weight in principal selection, with final authority resting with the Superintendent. I strongly oppose this for the following reasons:

1. Conflict of Interest/Policy: Current statutes prohibit SCCs from hiring or firing principals. Giving a 50% weight creates a "de facto" hiring power that contradicts existing labor agreements and Department policies.

2. Integrity of Evaluation: Shifting final authority to the Superintendent and SCCs bypasses the professional, merit-based evaluation currently facilitated by the CAS, which understands the specific nuances of our community.
3. Risk of "Honolulu-Centric" Governance: Removing regional leadership risks centralizing power in Honolulu. For rural complexes like Nanakuli-Waianae and for our colleagues on the Neighbor Islands, a centralized structure ignores our unique geographic, cultural, and socio-economic challenges. This bill risks creating "CAS-like" positions that lack accountability to the specific communities they serve.

In conclusion, I cannot support a measure dissolving a proven leadership structure without presenting a clear, well-researched, and concise plan of action. Any changes to the Department's administrative framework must be made in consultation with our union and through a transparent process that prioritizes student outcomes over bureaucratic restructuring. Until such a plan is presented, we respectfully urge the committee to hold this bill.

Respectfully submitted by,



Sheldon Konno, M.Ed

Principal, Wai'anae Elementary School

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 2:42:43 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Catherine Lott	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions**

**TESTIFIER(S): Catherine Lott**

**POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

**I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 3334. While the stated intent of reducing "administrative burdens" is understandable, this bill fundamentally misinterprets the role of the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS). Eliminating this position would dismantle the essential regional leadership that protects our most vulnerable rural and Neighbor Island schools.**

**My opposition is based on four critical concerns:**

**1. Disruption of the Tri-Level Leadership & Federal Compliance**

**The CAS is not "bureaucratic red tape"; they are the vital conduit connecting individual school needs with state-level mandates.**

- Operational Stability: Eliminating this layer severs the communication link between the "schoolhouse" and the Department's central leadership, leaving schools as "islands of operation" without a cohesive regional strategy.**
- Funding Oversight: The CAS plays a pivotal role in monitoring compliance for federal programs, including Title I and IDEA (Special Education). Removing this regional oversight risks administrative errors that could jeopardize federal funding and, more importantly, the delivery of services to students with high needs.**

**2. Systemic Neglect and Professional Burnout**

**Section 17 of the bill remains dangerously vague regarding the reassignment of CAS duties. Any attempt to revert to a centralized district model would drastically increase the span of control for remaining administrators. Asking a smaller number of individuals to oversee a**

larger volume of schools is a recipe for systemic neglect and rapid leadership burnout, ultimately hurting the teachers and students who rely on consistent support.

### **3. Professional Merit vs. Political Selection (SCC Authority)**

The proposal to give School Community Councils (SCC) a 50% weight in principal selection is deeply concerning:

- **Professional Integrity:** Principal selection must remain a merit-based, professional evaluation facilitated by educational experts. Shifting this power to the SCC risks turning a professional appointment into a localized "popularity contest" or a political battleground for a small number of vocal individuals.
  - I sat on the SCC for 7 years as a parent at both middle and high schools. I know the lack of understanding that the community and parents have regarding the needs of schools and how they are run. Giving more power to the SCC is not a reasonable recommendation.
- **Labor Conflicts:** This shift creates a "de facto" hiring power that directly contradicts existing collective bargaining agreements. Such a move invites unnecessary litigation and labor unrest.

### **4. The Threat of "Honolulu-Centric" Governance**

Removing regional leadership threatens to centralize all decision-making power within the "town" core of Honolulu. For rural complexes like Kau-Keaau-Pahoa and our colleagues on the other Neighbor Islands, this bill is a step backward. A hyper-centralized system lacks accountability to the unique geographic, cultural, and socio-economic challenges of our specific communities. We need regional advocates who understand our students' faces, not just their data points.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to hold SB 3334 and preserve the regional leadership structure that ensures equity and professional oversight for all Hawaii's public schools.

Respectfully,

Catherine Lott

**To:** The Senate Committee on Education

**From:** Desiree Sides, CAS for Baldwin-Kekaulike-Kulanihako'i-Maui, Maui District (Retired)

**Date:** February 11, 2026

**Re:** Testimony in Strong Opposition to SB 3334

Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 3334. As the retired Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) for the Baldwin-Kekaulike-Kulanihako'i-Maui Complex Area, I am deeply displeased by the language in this bill. To see my work as an educator—and the role I played for the 21 schools I supported—dismissed as an "unnecessary administrative burden" is a profound insult to every educator who has served in this capacity.

I know I worked tirelessly to represent those 21 schools, ensuring that the voices of Maui's teachers, students, and parents were heard in Honolulu. This bill seeks to erase that entire leadership structure based on the false premise that our role created "unclear authority". On the contrary, we provided the very clarity and local presence that neighbor island schools depend on.

My opposition is rooted in the following:

- **A Dismissive and Centralized Vision:** The bill claims to "revisit the foundational elements" of our system by simply repealing the CAS position. By replacing a dedicated regional leader with a vague "administrative framework" and an "appropriate authority" to be designated by rule, you are effectively abandoning neighbor island schools. In our experience, neighbor island schools are already susceptible to communication delays; removing the CAS layer will only exacerbate this isolation. I know from experience that when a crisis hits like the Lahaina Fires, it was important for my fellow CAS for the Hana Lanai Lahainluna Molokai and I to be physically here to respond accordingly. The State Superintendent and his team relied on this information to coordinate their State Office support.
- **Undermining Professionalism in Leadership:** I am troubled by the change in the principal selection process. Under SB 3334, the School Community Council (SCC) evaluation accounts for 50% of the overall evaluation, with the State Superintendent holding "final authority to appoint". By removing the CAS from this process, you eliminate the professional recommendation of someone who actually knows the schools in the complex. An SCC, while well-intentioned, often lacks the technical understanding of the "complexity" of school leadership, and by the nature and immenseness of our State District, our State Superintendent rightfully relies on regional professional input to make final appointments.

A State Superintendent cannot have a solid, nuanced understanding of what is happening at a school on a different island without the CAS bridge. It is in the working relationship with each CAS that the Superintendent is able to support all schools in Hawaii. The CAS is currently responsible for supervising the delivery of instructional support, monitoring compliance with state and federal laws, and overseeing special education programs. SB 3334 repeals these direct lines of regional accountability. Without this intermediate layer, the State Superintendent will be making decisions in a vacuum, detached from the unique cultural and geographical challenges of individual complexes.

I spent my career fighting for the schools in my complex area. To see the legislature label that dedication as a "burden" is disheartening. This bill does not improve leadership; it destroys the bridge between the community and the state. I respectfully, but firmly, urge you to hold SB 3334.

Thank you for the opportunity to stand up for the 21 schools I was honored to represent.

Sincerely,

Desiree Sides

BKKM Complex Area Superintendent (Retired)

[96708dsno@gmail.com](mailto:96708dsno@gmail.com)

(808) 268-2477

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Desiree Sides", is positioned above a solid blue horizontal line.

Desiree Sides (Feb 11, 2026 15:17:56 HST)

**Date:** Friday, February 13, 2026  
**Time:** 1:05pm  
**Location:** Conference Room CR 229 &  
Videoconference  
**Committee:** EDN

**Department:** Hawaii Department of Education

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education:** Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**TESTIFIER(S):** Ashley DeSilva

**POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

I'm writing to express my opposition to SB 3334. While I understand the intent to reduce "administrative burdens," this bill fails to recognize the essential regional leadership that Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) provide, particularly for rural and underserved communities.

My opposition is based on four critical concerns:

### **1. Erosion of the Tri-Level Leadership Framework**

The CAS is not just an administrative layer; they are the vital conduit connecting individual school needs with state-level initiatives. Eliminating this position severs the communication link between the school and the Department of Education's central leadership. Without a CAS, our schools risk becoming islands of operation, lacking a cohesive regional strategy or a direct line of advocacy at the state level.

### **2. Request for Additional Clarity on the Replacement for CAS**

Section 17 of the bill is vague as to how CAS duties would be reassigned. If the goal was to return to district superintendents, it would greatly increase the number of schools under the supervision of fewer individuals, leading to systemic neglect and burnout.

### **3. Improper Expansion of School Community Council (SCC) Authority**

The bill proposes giving SCC evaluations a 50% weight in the principal selection process. We oppose this shift for the following reasons:

- **Union Contract Conflicts:** This creates a "de facto" hiring power for SCCs that contradicts existing labor agreements.
- **Integrity of Evaluation:** This shift bypasses the professional, merit-based evaluation currently facilitated by the CAS. I am concerned that, without regional oversight, the

selection process could be easily disrupted by a small number of disgruntled individuals rather than being focused on professional competence.

#### **4. Risk of "Honolulu-Centric" Governance**

Removing regional leadership altogether threatens to centralize power entirely on the Big Island. For rural complexes like mine, Kohala, Waimea, and Honokaa, and for our colleagues on the Neighbor Islands. This centralized structure ignores our unique geographic, cultural, and socio-economic challenges. This bill risks creating a hyper-centralized system that lacks accountability to the specific communities it is meant to serve.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain the regional leadership structure that ensures our schools, teachers, and students receive the specialized support they require. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Ashley DeSilva

February 11, 2026

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate,

My name is Tanya Leinā'ala Hall, and I am the Principal of Queen Ka'ahumanu Elementary School. I am writing to formally express my opposition to Senate Bill 3334.

While I am a firm believer in the power of community engagement and shared decision-making, the structural changes outlined in SB3334 would have detrimental effects on school leadership, operational stability, and the overall quality of education we provide to our students. Specifically, I am concerned about the following:

#### I. The Elimination of Complex Area Superintendents (CAS)

In a centralized system like Hawai'i's, the CAS position is a fundamental necessity, not an elective luxury. My CAS provides the essential bridge between the Department's state-level mandates and the daily reality of my campus. Eliminating this role would:

- Remove Critical Support: Principals rely on the CAS for guidance on complex legal, personnel, and instructional issues.
- Increase Fragmentation: Without the CAS, we lose the regional cohesion that ensures all schools in a complex are moving in the same direction.
- Overburden School Leaders: Removing this layer of leadership forces more administrative weight onto principals, detracting from our ability to be instructional leaders for our teachers and students.

#### II. Changes to Evaluation and Hiring via the School Community Council (SCC)

SB3334 proposes involving the SCC in the evaluation and hiring of principals. While the SCC provides invaluable advisory feedback, giving them authority over personnel matters is problematic for several reasons:

- Professional Standards: Evaluating a principal requires specialized training in educational leadership standards and labor law—qualifications the SCC is not designed or resourced to hold.
- Objectivity and Privacy: Moving personnel decisions into a community council setting risks compromising the confidentiality and objectivity required for fair labor practices.
- Systemic Inconsistency: This change would lead to a "patchwork" of evaluation standards across the state, making it difficult to maintain a high, uniform bar for school leadership.

I believe that SB3334, while perhaps well-intentioned in its goal of community empowerment, would ultimately destabilize our schools and weaken the leadership pipeline. I respectfully ask this committee to defer or reject SB3334 and instead work with principals and educators to find ways to strengthen our current systems. Furthermore, I would like to extend a warm invitation to any member of this committee to spend a day at Queen Ka'ahumanu Elementary; I would welcome the opportunity to show you firsthand the complexities of our daily operations and the vital, collaborative role my CAS plays in our school's success.

Mahalo for your dedication to our keiki and for considering the perspective of those of us leading on the front lines in our schools.

Me ka ha'aha'a,



Tanya Leinā'ala Hall

Principal

Queen Ka'ahumanu Elementary School

**TESTIMONY OF JUSTIN S. N. MEW**

44-Year Employee, Hawai'i Department of Education  
27-Year Public School Administrator  
Sitting Principal, Henry J. Kaiser High School  
Honolulu, Hawai'i

**TO:** Senate Committee on Education

**RE:** SB 3334 (2026 Regular Session) – Relating to Education

**POSITION:** Strong Opposition

**HEARING DATE:** February 13, 2026

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Chair and Members of the Committee,

Aloha and thank you for the opportunity to testify in **strong opposition** to SB 3334.

I submit this testimony as a 44-year employee of the Hawai'i Department of Education and a 27-year public school administrator who has served our public schools across multiple phases of reform and restructuring. My perspective reflects both long-term institutional knowledge and daily operational experience.

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## **I. Repeal of the Complex Area Superintendent Position**

SB 3334 proposes to repeal the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position. I respectfully urge the Committee to reconsider this action.

Hawai'i operates the only single, statewide public school district in the nation. Within this structure, the CAS serves as a critical layer of leadership that:

- Provides direct supervision and professional evaluation of principals
- Ensures instructional coherence across elementary, middle, and high schools within a complex
- Aligns state-level policy with school-level implementation
- Oversees compliance with federal and state mandates
- Supports crisis response, safety oversight, and operational accountability

- Understands the specific cultural and geographic context of each community

Eliminating the CAS position would not streamline the system; rather, it would centralize authority in a way that distances leadership from schools and overextends the capacity of the Superintendent.

In a geographically diverse state such as Hawai'i, localized leadership is essential for coherence, responsiveness, and accountability.

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## **II. School Community Councils and Principal Evaluation**

SB 3334 would allow School Community Councils (SCCs) to submit principal evaluations to the Superintendent.

While SCCs play a valuable advisory and governance role, they are not trained evaluators of school leadership. SCC members are typically non-educators and do not receive formal training in:

- Instructional leadership standards
- Administrator evaluation frameworks
- Legal and regulatory compliance requirements
- Collective bargaining agreements
- Student privacy and due process protections

Principal evaluation requires professional expertise and familiarity with:

- Instructional leadership expectations
- Data-driven school improvement
- Special education and civil rights compliance

- Budget management and procurement
- Personnel supervision
- School safety protocols

Allowing untrained bodies to contribute formal evaluation input risks:

- Subjectivity over professional standards
- Politicization of school leadership
- Inconsistent application across schools
- Erosion of due process protections

Principals are required to make complex and sometimes unpopular decisions in the best interest of students and compliance with law. Evaluation systems must preserve professional integrity and stability.

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### **III. Governance and System Stability**

This bill combines:

- Removal of an intermediate supervisory structure (CAS), and
- Introduction of evaluation input from untrained advisory bodies (SCCs), while centralizing appointment authority in the Superintendent.

This restructuring risks weakening clear lines of supervision and accountability within an already complex statewide system.

Structural changes of this magnitude should be approached with caution and broad stakeholder consultation, including principals, complex area superintendents, teachers, and community representatives.

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## Conclusion

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to defer SB 3334.

Our students deserve stability.

Our schools require coherent leadership.

Our principals must be evaluated by trained educational professionals.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

**Justin S. N. Mew**

Principal, Henry J. Kaiser High School

44-Year Employee, Hawai'i Department of Education

27-Year Public School Administrator

Honolulu, Hawai'i

February 11, 2026

To the Honorable Chair Kouchi and Senate Members,

As the Principal of Kaua'i High School, I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed restructuring of our educational leadership and the overhaul of the principal selection process. While I support the spirit of community engagement, the specific mechanisms in this proposal threaten to destabilize school leadership and dilute the professional standards necessary to run a complex and a high school.

The proposal to eliminate Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) positions and consolidate support from 15 areas down to seven districts is a move toward a "one-size-fits-all" model that ignores the unique needs of our local communities.

The most concerning aspect of this proposal is granting the School Community Council (SCC) a 50% weight in the selection and evaluation of principals. Selecting a school leader is a highly technical task that requires deep expertise in pedagogy provided by the department, labor relations, school finance, and safety law. While SCC input is invaluable for understanding community "fit," weighing that input at 50% risks turning a professional hiring process into a popularity contest or a political campaign. Principals are often required to make difficult, unpopular decisions to protect students or uphold state policy. If a principal's job security or selection is tied so heavily to an SCC, they may feel pressured to prioritize the desires of a vocal minority over the safety and academic requirements of the school at large.

The "Grit" and "Perseverance" we ask of our students are also required of our leaders. To attract and retain high-quality principals, we must provide a stable, professional career ladder. This proposal creates an environment of instability that will discourage our best educators from seeking leadership roles, fearing that their professional standing will be subject to the shifting winds of local council dynamics rather than objective performance standards.

Effective school leadership requires a balance of community input and professional oversight. This proposal swings the pendulum too far, creating a structure that is geographically detached (7 districts vs. 15) yet professionally compromised (50% SCC weight).

For the stability of our schools and the protection of our leadership professional standards, I urge you to hold this bill to continue the current leadership practices by the Department of Education.

Respectfully submitted,

Marlene Leary Principal, Kaua'i High School

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 5:02:46 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Malaea Wetzel	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Malaea Wetzel and I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to SB 3334, which proposes eliminating the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position within the Hawai‘i State Department of Education (HIDOE).

I have served as the proud principal of Hale‘iwa Elementary for 16 years, working under four Complex Area Superintendents, all of whom were accomplished principals prior to serving as CAS. I offer this testimony from the perspective of a school-based leader, informed by operational reality, and grounded in service to a rural community within Hawai‘i’s unique statewide school system.

While I understand the intent to reduce “administrative burdens,” SB 3334 does not fully account for the essential regional leadership that CASs provide, particularly for rural, small, and underserved schools.

**The CAS Is a Critical Line Leadership Role**

The CAS is not an administrative layer; it is a line officer position with direct responsibility for supporting schools and students. In HIDOE, line officers include the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendents, CASs, Principals, and Vice Principals. Other administrators serve in staff roles, designed to support—rather than replace—line leadership.

Eliminating the CAS does not reduce bureaucracy; it removes a key leadership link between schools and the state system.

**Operational Reality: What CASs Do for Schools**

From a school-level perspective, the CAS is the primary point of contact when urgent or complex issues arise. I rely on my CAS for:

- Emergencies involving student or staff safety
- Legal matters, including special education due process

- Complex parent concerns
- Navigating compliance requirements while maintaining instructional focus
- Securing staffing and resources needed to meet student needs

As the principal of the smallest school in my complex area, CAS advocacy is especially important. Because CASs are former principals, they understand the realities of school leadership and can effectively advocate upward, ensuring that state-level decisions reflect on-the-ground conditions.

### **Lack of Clarity Regarding Replacement Structure**

Section 17 of SB 3334 provides insufficient clarity regarding how CAS responsibilities would be reassigned. If the intent is to revert to a district superintendent model, this would significantly increase the number of schools overseen by fewer leaders—a structure that has previously proven unsustainable.

Such a shift would likely lead to delayed responses, diminished support, and leadership burnout, with direct consequences for schools and students.

### **Concerns Regarding Expanded SCC Authority**

The proposal to assign 50% weight to School Community Council evaluations in principal selection raises serious concerns, including potential conflicts with union agreements and erosion of the professional, merit-based evaluation currently supported through CAS oversight.

Without regional leadership, principal selection risks being influenced by narrow interests rather than professional qualifications and demonstrated leadership effectiveness.

### **Risk of Over-Centralized Governance**

HIDOE is the only statewide school system in the nation, serving approximately 165,000 students across diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic contexts.

CASs oversee complex areas, enabling nimble, context-aware leadership. Eliminating this role risks concentrating authority in Honolulu-based offices and reducing responsiveness to rural communities like the Waialua Complex, where I serve, and our neighbor island communities.

### **Conclusion**

SB 3334 reflects a misunderstanding of how Hawai‘i’s public education system operates. The CAS position is not redundant; it is essential to equity, responsiveness, compliance, and instructional stability across a complex statewide system.

Eliminating CASs would not reduce administrative burden; it would shift that burden to schools, weaken system coherence, and place students at greater risk.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to hold SB 3334.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,  
Malaea Wetzel  
Principal, Hale'iwa Elementary School

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 5:41:05 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Esther Kanehailua	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Testimony in Opposition to SB3334**

**TO:** Chair of the Senate Committee on Education

**FROM:** Esther Kanehailua, Retired Complex Area Superintendent

**DATE:** 2/11/26

**RE: STRONGEST OPPOSITION to SB3334 – Relating to the Department of Education**

To the Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express my **strong opposition** to SB3334. My perspective is not based on theory, but on a 34-year career within the Hawaii Department of Education. I began my journey in the classroom then served as a Vice Principal, Principal, and ultimately a Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) until my retirement in July 2025.

I have seen leaders and initiatives come and go, but one truth remains: the CAS is the essential connection between each unique complex area to the statewide system.

**1. The SPED Crisis: Protecting Schools from Due Process**

We are currently seeing a dramatic increase in **Special Education due process hearings**. These legal proceedings are incredibly intensive, technically complex, and emotionally exhausting for school-level teams.

- **The Role of the DES:** Under the direction of the CAS, the **District Educational Specialist (DES)** and the Complex Area Team provide the essential "legal and instructional shield" for principals.
- **The Failure of Centralization:** It is a physical and logistical impossibility for the State Superintendent or State Leadership to provide this level of granular, daily support to over 280 individual schools. And in this case, Charter Schools as well. Without the CAS

team, a principal facing a due process hearing would be left effectively abandoned, leading to burnout and significant legal liability for the State.

## **2. Proven Crisis Leadership: From Pandemic to Mauna Loa**

During my tenure, I worked endlessly with my Complex Area Team to support our principals through the unprecedented shift of the **COVID-19 pandemic**—navigating the move to online learning and the complex "return to learn" phases. The CAS was the main conduit and support of school administrators.

- When **Mauna Loa erupted**, it was the Hawaii County CAS's who sat at the table with Hawaii County Personnel to ensure our schools were integrated into emergency responses.
- The State Superintendent and State Leaders cannot effectively manage a localized natural disaster, school emergency or a community-specific health crisis. The CAS is the boots-on-the-ground DOE lead during these events.

## **3. Trust and Advocacy**

Superintendent Hayashi **trust the CAS** to be the definitive voice for their respective communities and can direct state level supports as needed. Superintendent Hayashi and the State Leadership have worked hard to understand the unique needs of each complex area, balancing the unifying aspects of the Department.

- The CAS is the primary advocate for a complex's unique needs, whether that is rural resource allocation or urban safety concerns.
- By eliminating the CAS, you are silencing the local voice and forcing the State Leadership to make "one-size-fits-all" decisions that rarely fit anyone.

## **4. Community and Economic Networks**

Finally, the CAS builds and supports the public and private partnerships that allow our graduates to thrive in their community (complex area). These networks provide the internships and local career pathways that keep our youth in Hawaii. These relationships are built on years of trust between the CAS, Principal and local business/community leaders.

From my first day in the classroom in 1991 to my last day as a CAS in 2025, I have seen that the most effective decisions are made closest to the students. SB3334 moves the "brain" of the department too far away from the "heart" of the schools. I urge you to **defer this bill indefinitely**.

Mahalo for your time and for your commitment to our students.

Sincerely,

Esther Kanehailua

Retired Complex Area Superintendent

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Maegan MacGregor, and I am a school administrator within the Hawai'i Department of Education. I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to SB3334, specifically regarding the elimination of CAS positions, the proposed role of School Community Councils (SCCs in evaluating administrators, and the inclusion of National Board incentives.

CAS positions are critical to the effective functioning of our public schools. They serve as the essential link between statewide Department of Education initiatives and individual schools. As new initiatives are rolled out, CAS leaders provide guidance, interpretation, and support to ensure consistent and faithful implementation across districts. They guide schools and districts on new initiatives, ensure alignment with statewide priorities, and help keep all schools in compliance with DOE policy, state mandates, and federal requirements. Eliminating CAS positions removes a key layer of instructional leadership and system coherence that schools rely on for support and guidance.

SB3334 also proposes that School Community Councils evaluate school administrators. SCC members are parents and community representatives who bring valuable perspectives; however, they are not trained or licensed educators, nor are they experts in curriculum, instructional leadership, research-based learning strategies, or public-school finance. In my experience, SCC members have questioned why geographic exception requirements are not waived for general education students or why school finances are not managed like a private business. These concerns reflect a misunderstanding of public education law, equity mandates, and fiscal regulations. Administrators are already evaluated through rigorous, professional processes conducted by trained educational leaders, and shifting this responsibility to untrained individuals undermines the integrity and purpose of administrator evaluation.

Additionally, the inclusion of National Board incentives in SB3334 is unnecessary and conflicts with existing legislation that already addresses National Board Certification and associated incentives. Creating overlapping or duplicative statutory language introduces confusion, risks inconsistent implementation, and complicates compliance for schools and the Department. Rather than strengthening support for educators, this provision creates redundancy and uncertainty within an area that is already governed by established law.

Parent and community voice is essential and should continue to inform school improvement efforts. However, SB3334 conflates advisory input with professional evaluation, weakens systemic instructional leadership by eliminating CAS positions, and introduces statutory conflict regarding National Board incentives.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to oppose SB3334 in its current form.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,  
Maegan MacGregor

Principal Pa'auilo Elementary and Intermediate School  
Hawai'i Department of Education

**Date:** Friday February 13, 2026

**Time:** 1:05pm

**Location:** Conference Room CR 229 &  
Videoconference

**Committee:** EDN

**Department:** Ka'ū-Kea'au-Pāhoa Complex Area, Hawai'i State Department of Education

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education** Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**TESTIFIER(S):** Joy Hohnstine

**POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

I am writing to express my opposition to SB 3334. While I understand the intent to reduce "administrative burdens", I am deeply concerned that this bill fails to recognize the essential regional leadership that Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) provide—particularly for rural and underserved communities.

My opposition is based on the following concerns which I believe represent a significant risk of exacerbating an inequity of access, representation, and decision making for rural communities such as the one I have served for the last twenty years as an employee of the Hawai'i State Department of Education.

- **Risk of "Honolulu-Centric" Governance**

- Removing regional leadership altogether threatens to centralize power entirely in Honolulu. For rural complex areas like mine, and indeed all the Neighbor Island complex areas, a centralized structure ignores our unique geographic, cultural, and socio-economic challenges. This bill risks creating a hyper-centralized system that lacks accountability to the specific communities it is meant to serve.
- Additionally, it is my belief that the decision making which would result from such a shift in leadership would center (or require the use of) solutions that are simply unavailable in rural communities. Such a predicament epitomizes the concept of inequity, as we would be unable to provide, build, or advocate for local solutions to meet local needs. This has the potential to significantly impact the educational opportunity, safety, and wellbeing of the youth and families we serve.

- **Erosion of the Tri-Level Leadership Framework**

- The CAS is not merely an administrative layer; they are the vital conduit connecting individual school needs with state-level initiatives. Eliminating this position severs the communication link between the "schoolhouse" and the Department of Education's central leadership. Without a CAS, our schools risk becoming "islands of operation," lacking a cohesive regional strategy or a direct line of advocacy at the state level.

- **Request for Additional Clarity on the Replacement for CAS**
  - Section 17 of the bill is vague as to how CAS duties would be reassigned. If the thought was to return to district superintendents, that would greatly increase the number of schools under the supervision of a smaller number of individuals, which will lead to systemic neglect and burnout.
  - For an island as geographically spread out as Hawai'i Island, a single district superintendent would be responsible for 41 public schools plus an additional 14 public charter schools over 4000 square miles of land. Providing timely, intentional, and specific support and oversight of that number of schools and over that distance will not only serve as a burden for any district superintendent but will inevitably lead to an imbalance of time and attention being provided to some of our schools, most likely those schools which are furthest away from any centralized, more populated areas of our island would bear the brunt of that lack of available time and attention.
  
- **Improper Expansion of School Community Council (SCC) Authority**
  - The bill proposes giving SCC evaluations a 50% weight in principal selection. I am concerned about this shift for the following reasons:
    - **Union Contract Conflicts:** This creates a "de facto" hiring power for SCCs that contradicts existing labor agreements.
    - **Integrity of Evaluation:** This shift bypasses the professional, merit-based evaluation currently facilitated by the CAS. Without regional oversight, the selection process could be easily disrupted by a small number of disgruntled individuals rather than focused on professional competence.
  - Additionally, for a variety of reasons, many schools in more rural areas struggle to maintain a robust SCC. If a school is struggling to maintain their SCC membership and yet is facing a hiring need for a new Principal we may find ourselves in the inevitable position of not being able to move forward with hiring in a timely manner which will undoubtedly impact the performance and morale of a school.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the Committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain the regional leadership structure that ensures our schools, teachers, and students receive the specialized support they require. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joy C. Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

**Date:** February 11, 2026

**Name and Role:** Tiffany Pratt, Principal

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education:** Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

My name is Tiffany Pratt, and I am a Principal with 30 years of experience in the Hawai'i Department of Education. I have served under the previous District Superintendent model and the current Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) structure. I am writing to express my **strong opposition** to SB 3334.

Every hour spent defending the basic infrastructure of our school system is an hour taken away from our students. When the legislature "throws a curveball" like SB 3334, it disrupts the hard work and positive momentum we are building in our schools. Our focus should be on the social-emotional needs, well-being, and academic success of our children, not on restructuring a system that is currently working.

My opposition is based on three critical concerns:

### **1. Protection of the Tri-Level Leadership Framework**

The CAS position is not a "middle-management" luxury; it is a vital communication bridge. Principals do not have the capacity to attend state-level meetings to learn about every new legislative mandate or initiative. The CAS translates state vision into school-level action. Currently, we have a Superintendent whose vision aligns with the field; dismantling the CAS position now would sever the feedback loop that allows principals to have a voice in state-level decision-making.

### **2. Risks of Expanding School Community Council (SCC) Authority**

The proposal to give SCCs a 50% weight in principal selection is a "slippery slope" that threatens the stability of school leadership:

- **Administrative Shortage:** We are already struggling to fill Principal and Vice Principal positions. If hiring becomes subject to the whims of an unprofessional or self-interested SCC, those positions will remain vacant. No one will apply to lead a school where the evaluation process is based on personal politics rather than professional merit.

- **Contractual & Professional Integrity:** This shift creates a "de facto" hiring power that conflicts with existing union agreements and bypasses the professional, merit-based oversight currently provided by the CAS.

### 3. Student-Centered

As a current resident of Hawai'i Island who previously worked on O'ahu for 14 years, I know firsthand that **student** needs are not uniform across the state. Removing leadership by complex areas threatens to centralize attention towards Honolulu. Neighbor Island schools and rural complexes like Nānākuli-Waianae face unique geographic, cultural, and socio-economic challenges. Our **students** need representation in all complex areas. Without a CAS to advocate for these specific needs, our voices will be lost in a centralized system that doesn't understand our local context.

**Closing: The current system is working.** Abolishing the CAS position would stall our progress and force us to restart from scratch at the expense of our **students'** stability. I urge the Committee to **hold SB 3334** and allow us to keep our focus where it belongs: on our **students**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Tiffany Pratt, Principal

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 7:12:57 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Dani Hitt	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate,

My name is Dani Hitt and I currently serve as a HICISL Vice Principal Intern at Roosevelt High School. I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 3334.

Most public school administrators in Hawai‘i have participated in the HICISL intern program. The program provides practical, on-the-job training along with extensive professional learning, including structured job shadowing. A required component for all interns is to spend a day shadowing the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS). We are not required to complete this shadow because PDERI expects we will all become CASs, but because the position is fundamental to understanding how leadership, supervision, and accountability operate within our vast statewide system.

Act 51 was introduced to strengthen accountability and clarify lines of responsibility. In practice, what I observed during my shadow day was accountability in action. During a small portion of our day, we visited a school identified for Additional Targeted Support (ATS) while a consultant was on campus to monitor implementation. During our visit, the principal clearly articulated the improvement plan for the next three years, and CAS Dilwith required evidence, timelines, and measurable outcomes. It was also clear that she will continue to follow up and hold the principal responsible for implementing that plan. CAS Dilwith has the context, relationships, and authority to both support and demand results. Having leaders who are close to schools allows decisions to be made with nuance, history, and relationships in mind. Removing that layer risks pushing more operational responsibility upward to the superintendent’s office, likely slowing responses and distancing decision-makers from the campuses they serve.

SB 3334 replaces this role with an unspecified “appropriate authority.” The responsibilities will not disappear, but the bill does not make clear who will carry them or how they will maintain the close knowledge of schools that makes real accountability possible. CAS leadership is not bureaucracy; it is how the department ensures that plans lead to action and that schools improve.

The Department of Education’s vision is to ensure that our students are globally competitive and locally committed. Weakening the structures that provide direct supervision, support, and accountability to schools places that vision at risk. Continuous improvement is essential, but replacing a clearly defined role with a vague framework introduces uncertainty at a time when schools need coherence and stability. Before dismantling a structure that is functioning, I would

hope to see compelling evidence that the proposed change will better serve students, families, and educators.

I respectfully urge the Senate to vote against SB 3334 and, instead, to engage principals, complex area superintendents, educators, and community partners in deliberate conversation focused on strengthening, not removing, effective leadership systems in the Hawai'i State Department of Education. Perhaps a place to start would be a day for each of you to shadow a CAS.

Thank you for your service to our community and for taking the time to consider the perspective of those of us working in schools each day.

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

From: Bebi Davis

Subject: Written Testimony in Opposition to SB 3334

Date: February 13, 2026  
1:05 PM, Conference Room 229

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

My name is Bebi Davis, and I am the principal of Kaiulani Elementary School. I respectfully submit this testimony in strong and unequivocal opposition to SB 3334.

As a principal in Hawai'i's statewide public school system, I am responsible for leading instruction, student safety, staff supervision, fiscal management, legal compliance, crisis response, and driving academic achievement. These responsibilities require strong, coordinated leadership support. Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) provide that support and are essential to maintaining systemwide coherence and accountability. Principals rely on the guidance and support of our CAS to navigate some of the many challenges that schools face, especially when new and emergent issues arise.

Complex Area Superintendents bring extensive experience, knowledge, and skills to support critical instructional and operational leaders. They do far more than administrative oversight, they strengthen principal capacity, improve school functioning, and directly enhance student outcomes. Specifically, CAS provide:

- Expert guidance on personnel and labor matters, ensuring fairness, due process, and compliance with complex contracts.
- Accountability for instructional quality, monitoring student performance and driving data-informed school improvement.
- Leadership coaching, strengthening principals' decision-making, school culture, and operational management.
- Rapid crisis response, coordinating resources and guidance during emergencies.
- Systemwide consistency, ensuring all schools implement state priorities, federal mandates, and legal requirements reliably.

Without CAS, principals might be overburdened and unsupported, forced to navigate critical challenges alone. Hawai'i's centralized system depends on alignment and coherence. CAS ensure:

- High expectations and equity in instruction across all schools.
- Data-driven interventions that accelerate student achievement.
- Strategic allocation of resources to where they are most needed.
- Compliance with federal and state mandates, protecting funding and legal standing.
- Principals' ability to focus on teaching and learning rather than operational firefighting.

Eliminating CAS might slow decision-making, and weaken accountability. Principals would face additional responsibilities without additional authority or training, directly threatening student outcomes.

I also want to address the proposed role for School Community Councils (SCCs) in principal evaluation and hiring. While SCCs are vital advisory bodies and well-intended volunteers, expanding their authority into formal personnel decisions would risk inconsistency, and legal exposure. Granting SCCs formal authority over principal evaluation and hiring would:

- Risk inconsistent standards across schools.
- Compromise confidentiality and risk legal vulnerability.
- Reduce objective accountability, undermining fairness and system coherence.

Expanding SCC authority into principal evaluation and hiring also raises serious governance concerns. While community input is valuable, personnel evaluation requires training in leadership standards, labor law, and performance frameworks. Shifting these responsibilities risks introducing subjectivity and inconsistency across campuses. Schools vary widely in community capacity, experience, and resources. Embedding SCCs into evaluation and hiring decisions could unintentionally create inequitable processes from one school to another. Principal evaluation and hiring require professional expertise, legal knowledge, and systemwide consistency, all of which SCCs are not trained or equipped to provide.

Our students deserve stable, coherent, and professionally led schools. Educators need support and strong leadership to drive learning and success.

For these reasons, I strongly and respectfully urge the Committee to reject SB 3334. Mahalo for your service to our students and for considering the perspective of those of us who lead schools every day.

Respectfully,  
Bebi Davis, EdD & PhD  
Principal, Ka'iulani Elementary School

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 8:22:37 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lauren Mauai	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**I am in opposition of SB3334. I do not agree that complex area superintendent positions should be repealed. The complex area superintendent allows for schools and principals to function in a timely manner. They are familiar with the complex area and its strengths and challenges. The complex area superintendent is the champion of their area and knows the student population that it serves. The complex area superintendent coaches the principals and guides the district to do what's best for the students. I have worked in the Nanakuli-Waianae complex for 26 years. Our current Complex Area Superintendent , Disa Hauge, listens to the needs of the students and teachers, challenges the schools to do better, and celebrates the successes of the community. What would be accomplished by removing the Complex Area Superintendents? Asking schools to wait longer for necessary paperwork, curriculum, or supplies because the requests need to go to a central office that doesn't know what the school needs. We need to keep caring and informed Complex Area Superintendents, like CAS Hauge, in these positions where they can do the most good.**

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 8:28:21 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lindsay Ball	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am against SB3334. This bill seems shortsighted. Have the repercussions been discussed thoroughly about the repercussions of having the complex area superintendents removed? The school community councils would need to be educated on how their tasks will change. There are so many demands of a current school principal, WSF, staffing, student behavior, compliance, complaints, & staff evaluations just to list a few. Taking away the principal's support person will make a principal's job that more difficult.

How will the state superintendent get important information to 256 Hawai'i schools? How would educational decisions be discussed and decided upon? This bill calls for less oversight of school on so many levels without consider things like: who will handle complex area grievances, terminations at that level? This bill would be similar to dismissing state legislators so the governor could handle making all decisions in isolation. We have legislators so the community can contact to you, the same is true for complex area superintendents. This bill is exactly why we don't need state legislators because they introduce silly bills such as this.

Is the expectation to have the state superintendent to visit every school every month to observe teacher instruction as well as deal with other school and school community issues? How efficient would that be? As a complex area superintendent I visited each school and classrooms every month even though I had to travel to three different islands.

**Date:** Friday February 13, 2026  
**Time:** 1:05pm  
**Location:** Conference Room CR 229 &  
Videoconference  
**Committee:** EDN

**Department:** Department of Education

**BILL:** SB 3334, Relating to Education Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**TESTIFIER(S):** Amy Stafford, Kohala High School Principal

**POSITION:** OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS

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

I am writing to express my opposition to SB 3334. While I understand the intent to reduce "administrative burdens," this bill fails to recognize the essential regional leadership that Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) provide—particularly for rural and underserved communities.

My opposition is based on five critical concerns:

#### **1. Erosion of the Tri-Level Leadership Framework**

The CAS is not merely an administrative layer; they are the vital conduit connecting individual school needs with state-level initiatives. Eliminating this position severs the communication link between the "schoolhouse" and the Department of Education's central leadership. Without a CAS, our schools risk becoming "islands of operation," lacking a cohesive regional strategy or a direct line of advocacy at the state level.

#### **2. Request for Additional Clarity on the Replacement for CAS**

Section 17 of the bill is vague as to how CAS duties would be reassigned. If the thought was to return to district superintendents, that would greatly increase the number of schools under the supervision of a smaller number of individuals, which will lead to systemic neglect and burnout.

#### **3. Improper Expansion of School Community Council (SCC) Authority**

The bill proposes giving SCC evaluations a 50% weight in principal selection. We oppose this shift for the following reasons:

- **Union Contract Conflicts:** This creates a "de facto" hiring power for SCCs that contradicts existing labor agreements.
- **Integrity of Evaluation:** This shift bypasses the professional, merit-based evaluation currently facilitated by the CAS. We are concerned that, without regional oversight, the selection process could be easily disrupted by a small number of disgruntled individuals who may not understand all the intricacies of school leadership and operations, rather than focused on professional competence.

#### **4. Risk of "Honolulu-Centric" Governance**

Removing regional leadership altogether threatens to centralize power entirely in Honolulu. For rural complexes like Kohala, a centralized structure ignores our unique geographic, cultural, and socio-economic

challenges. This bill risks creating a hyper-centralized system that lacks accountability to the specific communities it is meant to serve.

## **5. Loss of an Important Resource for Neighbor Island, Small Rural Schools**

Our Complex Area Superintendent, Janette Snelling, possesses a profound, firsthand understanding of our unique communities, schools, and families. Managing 19 schools across a massive geographic area on the Northern and Western coast of the Big Island is a staggering responsibility. Removing this position, or adding additional schools to her role, would be irresponsible and ineffective.

The support CAS Snelling provides ensures our outer island communities are served fairly and keeps situations from escalating to the state level.

- She handles parent concerns swiftly and locally, preventing unnecessary escalation or delays in resolution.
- Because she knows our specific needs, she is a powerful voice for us at the state level, ensuring our "rural" challenges aren't overlooked.
- She has elevated the quality of education across the HKKK complex through strategic, complex-wide initiatives focused on Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and improved attendance initiatives.
- For Kohala High School specifically, she was instrumental in helping us achieve the honor of being the first Accredited Small School in the Nation. She doesn't just manage; she actively secures community partnerships and finds the funding and personnel necessary to provide a "whole child" education.

Removing such an integral player in our students' success would be an irresponsible move that ignores the reality of our progress. I invite you to visit Kohala High School to see the impact CAS Snelling has made firsthand before making any decisions that could jeopardize the well-being of our students and community.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain the regional leadership structure that ensures our schools, teachers, and students receive the specialized support they require.

Respectfully,



Amy Stafford (Feb 11, 2026 20:20:24 HST)

Amy J. Stafford  
Principal, Kohala High School

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 8:56:01 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Hazel T Sumile	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a member of the public and a retired DOE Principal, District Superintendent, and teacher, I am testifying to oppose this Senate Bill that repeals the position of Complex Area Superintendent. If you want a truly top-down organization, go ahead and repeal those positions.

When they were created, the intent was to bring leadership as close to the classroom and school level as possible, and thereby allow better and clearer communications among all levels. When you delete these positions and allow just one person, the state superintendent, to do all the hiring and firing of principals and all personnel, you will reinstate and even strengthen the top-down mode of governance. That totally goes against the concept of shared leadership and shared accountability. And when implemented improperly, this organizational structure will lead to chaos and total lack of direction for the school level and therefore at the classroom level as well.

I strongly urge that you reconsider and discard this bill. If you pass it, you will be going back to the 20th century with the schools in the Hawaii Department of Education and chaos will undoubtedly ensue.

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 8:58:17 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kyle Shimabukuro	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

i am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 3334. Although the intent of this bill is to reduce "administrative burdens," it fails to recognize the leadership and support provided by Complex Area Superintendents for individual schools and their surrounding communities.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kyle Shimabukuro

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:58:31 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kevin Dias	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Chair Mercado Kim and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB3334, which proposes to repeal the position of Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) within the Hawai‘i Department of Education. While the intent may be to streamline administration, removing this layer of leadership will create significant operational gaps that will ultimately harm our schools and students.

I oppose this bill for the following reasons:

1. **Scope of Administrative Responsibility:** Hawai‘i’s DOE is a unique, single statewide district overseeing 297 schools (public and charter). To expect the State Superintendent to effectively supervise and meet the needs of the nearly 300 individual school principals is a tall task that would result in a lack of accountability, something this bill states it seeks to increase. The CAS provides the necessary, localized oversight that a state-level executive simply cannot, thus holding principals more accountable to their schools, stakeholders, district, and state system.
2. **Level of Support Necessary:** The CAS offers direct, timely, and comprehensive support to principals. In times of crisis, whether a facility emergency, a safety threat, or a sudden personnel issue, principals need an immediate supervisor who is geographically accessible and familiar with their specific community. Additionally, the Complex Area serves as a vital service hub that facilitates resources and supports directly to the school level. This includes coordinating services for high-need student populations (Special Education, English Learners, and Disadvantaged students), providing teacher mentoring, supporting the school level with personnel matters, and facilitating professional development. Removing the CAS removes the local leadership responsible for ensuring these resources are distributed equitably and effectively to area schools.
3. **Essential Tri-Level Alignment:** The CAS position helps to provide coherence in the tri-level system. They are responsible for translating broad State initiatives into actionable district goals and then supporting individual schools in implementing them. Without this alignment, there is a high risk that State mandates will become disconnected from the reality of the classroom and school community.
4. **A Balanced Approach to Principal Selection:** I am particularly concerned with the proposed changes to the principal selection process. The current system, where the CAS leads a committee of sitting principals, teachers, staff, parents, and community members, including a member of the SCC, is a proven and balanced model. These stakeholders

possess the collective professional and local perspective necessary to meet the specific needs of a school. Increasing the responsibility of the SCC role shifts final evaluation away from this balanced professional group and dilutes the integrity of the selection process.

The CAS is not "middle management" for the sake of bureaucracy; it is a functional necessity for a district of this scale. I urge the committee to defer this bill and instead look for ways to better support the complex area structure.

Respectfully,

Kevin Dias

**February 12, 2026**

**To:** Chair Kim and Members of the Committee

**From:** Tara Mālie Hathaway, District Educational Specialist

**District:** Aiea-Moanalua-Radford

**RE: STRONG OPPOSITION to SB3334**

Dear Madame Chair Kim and Committee Members,

As a District Educational Specialist in the Aiea-Moanalua-Radford District, representing approximately 50,468 community members and 22 schools, **I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB3334.** This bill would significantly compromise our ability to lead our schools effectively by eliminating the vital role of the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS).

### **The Essential Role of the CAS**

The CAS is not "bureaucratic waste"; they are the pilot of our district's flight. In a district as high-performing as ours, the CAS provides:

- **Localized Direction:** Tailoring state goals to the specific needs of our unique student populations.
- **Operational Foresight:** Making the difficult personnel and resource calls that keep schools running smoothly.
- **A Buffer for Leadership:** Supporting administrators, faculty, and parents through the complexities of the modern educational journey.

Removing the CAS position would create a bottleneck at the state level, leaving our schools without the localized leadership necessary to function. It would be akin to removing the Governor and expecting the state to maintain its direction.

### **The Real Strain on the System**

In my 25 years as an educator, I have witnessed a troubling shift. Educators are no longer just teaching content; they are functioning as therapists, social workers, and peacekeepers. The "broken system" often cited by outsiders is not a result of district leadership, but of an **over-extended mandate.** We have students for six hours a day; the remaining 18 hours fall to the family and community. When the government dictates how we, the experts, should do our jobs while simultaneously shielding students from the consequences of their actions, the system fails. We need *more* support for our educators, not the removal of the leaders who advocate for them.

### **Addressing Actual "Waste"**

If the legislature is looking to address fiscal waste, I urge you to look toward the **mandated ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) laws**. Hawai'i is one of the few states to mandate these services within schools, forcing us to pay astronomical fees to outside agencies because we cannot compete with their pay scales to hire enough personnel. This is a clear example of a policy put in place without regard for the practical handicaps it places on the Department of Education.

## **Conclusion**

Removing the Complex Area Superintendents will not streamline accountability; it will only isolate schools and hinder student success. We need our leaders on the ground, not a centralized bottleneck.

**For these reasons, I stand firmly opposed to SB3334.**

Sincerely,

**Tara Mālie Hathaway**

District Educational Specialist  
Aiea-Moanalua-Radford Complex  
Hawai'i Department of Education  
Cell Phone: (808) 753-7840

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

As the Principal of Roosevelt High School, representing a community of 1,336 students and a dedicated team of 145 faculty and staff, I am writing to express my firm opposition to SB 3334.

While I appreciate the Legislature's interest in streamlining educational bureaucracy, this bill misidentifies the source of administrative burden. By eliminating the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position, SB 3334 does not simplify our system; it severs the vital lifeline that connects individual schools to the state's central leadership.

Hawaii's unique single-district structure requires a middle-tier leadership layer to function effectively. The CAS is not a redundant "middleman"—they are the operational hub for our complex. Our CAS understands Roosevelt's specific socio-economic landscape and community expectations in a way a distant central office cannot. Without a CAS, the Department of Education transforms into a monolith. Forcing 250+ principals to navigate a centralized state office directly will result in a breakdown of communication and a loss of school-specific advocacy.

The removal of local oversight creates immediate operational risks and bottlenecks. Currently, the CAS serves as the primary arbiter for School Community Council issues and student discipline appeals. Removing this layer will inevitably lead to a massive bottleneck at the State Superintendent's office, resulting in "justice delayed" for our students and families.

Lastly, the bill proposes giving SCC evaluations a 50% weight in principal selection. I am in opposition of this shift for the following reasons:

- **Union Contract Conflicts:** This creates a "de facto" hiring power for SCCs that contradicts existing labor agreements.
- **Integrity of Evaluation:** This shift bypasses the professional, merit-based evaluation currently facilitated by the CAS. We are concerned that, without regional oversight, the selection process could be easily disrupted by a small number of disgruntled individuals rather than focused on professional competence. the proposed restructuring of principal selection and evaluation removes the localized expertise needed to ensure a leader is the right cultural and operational fit for a specific school.

We cannot achieve efficiency by isolating school leaders. Eliminating the CAS position removes the localized expertise and advocacy Roosevelt High School relies on to thrive. I respectfully urge you to defer SB 3334; our focus should be on empowering the leadership that connects our schools to the state, not dissolving it.

## **Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate,**

My name is Sarene Oda, and I am the proud Principal of Stevenson Middle School. I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 3334.

Senate Bill 3334 proposes structural changes which would significantly weaken effective school leadership, operational stability, and instructional continuity. I am particularly concerned about (1) the elimination of Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) positions and (2) proposed changes requiring School Community Council (SCC) involvement in principal evaluation and hiring.

### **Elimination of CAS Positions**

In Hawai'i's centralized school system, the CAS serves as the critical link between schools and the state Department of Education. They provide instructional leadership, operational guidance, compliance oversight, and timely decision-making support.

Eliminating CAS positions would remove essential leadership support for principals, increase inconsistencies across schools, shift additional responsibilities without added capacity, and weaken systemwide coherence in implementing state and federal mandates. CAS are not redundant—they are indispensable partners in school improvement, crisis response, personnel guidance, and accountability.

### **Changes to Principal Evaluation and Hiring**

While I value shared decision-making and community partnership, expanding SCC authority into principal evaluation and hiring raises concerns regarding governance, confidentiality, objectivity, and equity. SCCs serve an important advisory role; however, personnel decisions require trained evaluators with expertise in leadership standards, legal requirements, and statewide priorities.

This proposal risks introducing inconsistencies across schools, politicizing leadership decisions, and blurring accountability within our centralized system.

### **Conclusion**

I strongly believe Senate Bill 3334 would result in harmful unintended consequences for leadership stability and student success. I urge the Senate to reject this bill and instead collaborate with education leaders and community partners to strengthen the leadership framework which ensures stability and success in Hawai'i's public schools.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued commitment to Hawai'i's students.

Mahalo for your time, attention, and consideration.

Sarene Oda

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 8:17:16 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kelly Sutcliffe	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate,

My name is Kelly Sutcliffe, and I am a Vice Principal currently in the HICISL Program for Educational Leadership. I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 3334.

SB3334 proposes changes that would significantly and negatively impact effective school leadership, operational stability, and instructional continuity. I am concerned about (1) the elimination of CAS positions and (2) proposed changes to principal evaluation and hiring procedures requiring School Community Council (SCC) involvement.

**1. Elimination of CAS Positions**

Our Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) play a unique and critical role In Hawai‘i’s statewide school system that doesn’t really exist in most mainland districts. Hawai‘i has a single statewide district, not multiple local districts. The Superintendants vision for all schools within the state is the Ne‘epapa" approach, in which public schools operate as a united, collaborative system to move forward together. The CAS serves as the regional leader connecting principals to the central office, and having a critical role in carrying out the Superintendent's vision, helping school's collaborate and work towards shared goals for student success, equity, and continuous improvement.

**Eliminating CAS positions would:**

1. Create a disconnect between schools and state leadership, and communication would become fragmented, slower and less responsive.
2. Remove a vital layer in the leadership framework, preventing the timely, personal support that our schools need..
3. Decrease individualized support for schools, directly impacting student achievement, principal support, and community engagement.

From a 'learning' Vice Principal's perspective, the CAS has been critical in ensuring that not only myself, but my colleagues are prepared and have the skillset necessary to be effective leaders. Through CAS's support, she meets with us, advises and guides us, intentionally places us in a school setting that will promote growth in our profession, and helps us develop the skills and dispositions necessary to be effective administrators. CAS is present in our schools and is

equipped to support the unique needs of each school in Hawai'i. CAS's have a deep understanding of our student demographics, community perspectives, and achievement data, CAS is able to collaborate closely with district leadership and principals to develop effective school improvement plans and deliver individualized, specialized support tailored to each school. Eliminating this position would be detrimental to our school leaders, and our students.

## **2. Changes to Principal Evaluation and Hiring Procedures**

SB3334's proposal to require School Community Council (SCC) involvement in principal evaluation and hiring raises serious concerns related to governance, objectivity, confidentiality, and equity.

While I value the current role the SCCs play in decision-making, expanding their authority into evaluation and hiring functions would:

- Undermine the professional hiring standards by allowing unqualified, untrained members of the community who may have little to no experience in leadership or instruction to make decisions.
- Risk bias or favoritism in the hiring process.
- Create liability risks and unclear lines of accountability, since principals are district employees and the district (not the SCC) is legally responsible for employment decisions.

School Community Councils (SCCs) should not have authority to evaluate or hire principals because these responsibilities require specialized professional expertise, legal oversight, and systemwide consistency that districts are structured to provide. Principal hiring and evaluation involve complex areas such as instructional leadership standards, personnel law, budgeting, and compliance, which trained district administrators are equipped to assess using formal frameworks. Since principals are district employees, the district holds legal responsibility for employment decisions, contracts, and due process, making clear lines of authority essential. Granting SCCs direct decision-making power could also introduce conflicts of interest, biases or inconsistent standards across schools. SCCs play an important and valuable role in representing community voice, and we value their input and participation, however they should remain an advisory role and not have enhanced authority.

### **Conclusion:**

To conclude, I respectfully oppose SB3334 because it would weaken the leadership structure that supports Hawai'i's unique statewide public school system and disrupt the stability our schools rely on to serve students effectively. Eliminating Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) would remove a critical layer of support, coordination, and accountability that connects schools to the broader system and ensures consistent progress toward shared goals. In addition, expanding the authority of the School Community Council to include principal evaluation and hiring would shift highly specialized personnel decisions away from those with the training and legal authority to make them. While community voice is essential and valued, strong schools depend on clear governance, professional standards, and coordinated leadership. For these reasons, I respectfully

ask that you reject SB3334 to protect effective school leadership, and to support the continued success of Hawai'i's students and educators.

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Nancy Agustin, and I am the Temporarily Assigned (TA) Vice Principal at Stevenson Middle School. As an active participant in the Hawaii Certification Institute for School Leaders (HICISL), I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 3334. While the intent of this bill may be to streamline our educational system, the proposed elimination of the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position would dismantle the essential support structures that allow emerging leaders like myself to grow and succeed.

From my perspective as an aspiring administrator, the CAS is far more than an administrative layer; they are a vital mentor and a foundational source of institutional knowledge. In our uniquely centralized system, it is unrealistic to expect the State Superintendent to provide the high-level, one-on-one coaching and professional development required to sustain a healthy leadership pipeline. My own professional journey has been deeply shaped by the guidance and local expertise of my CAS, who provides the nuanced, "boots-on-the-ground" coaching that a distant state office simply cannot replicate. Removing this role effectively severs the bridge between school-level administration and state-level leadership, leaving new and aspiring administrators without a clear or accessible support structure.

Furthermore, the CAS serves as a critical liaison that translates broad state policies into actionable strategies tailored to the specific socio-economic and cultural needs of our individual complexes. Eliminating this localized leadership would force over 250 principals to compete for the attention of an already overstretched central office, creating a dangerous leadership vacuum. This shift would not only delay justice for students and parents in matters of appeals and discipline, but it would also place an overwhelming compliance burden directly onto principals, distracting us from our primary role as instructional leaders. We should be empowering our Complex Area Superintendents to better support our schools rather than removing the very bridge that connects our communities to the state.

I respectfully urge the committee to defer SB 3334 and instead engage in a dialogue that strengthens, rather than dismantles, our leadership structures. Mahalo for your time and for your continued commitment to the future of Hawaii's students and school leaders.

Sincerely,

Nancy Agustin  
Vice Principal (TA), Stevenson Middle School

**Date:** Friday, February 13, 2026

**Time:** 1:05pm

**Location:** Conference Room CR 229 & Videoconference

**Committee:** EDN

**TO:** Chair Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee on Higher Education and Education

**RE: STRONGLY OPPOSE SB 3334 – Relating to Education**

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

As I look toward my upcoming retirement, my thoughts are not on the years behind me, but on the young leaders stepping into the position. It is with a heavy heart and a deep sense of responsibility to my successors that I offer my testimony in strong opposition to SB 3334.

I am particularly concerned for the novice principals who will lead our small, rural schools. Without the regional support of a Complex Area Superintendent (CAS), I fear we are setting them up for a journey that is lonely and overwhelming.

**The Vital Role of a Regional Mentor:** In a small rural school, the principal is often everything to everyone. For a non-veteran leader, the learning curve isn't just steep—it can be isolating. A CAS is not merely an administrator; they are a vital mentor who identifies avenues for support that a new principal might not even know exist.

For a novice principal in a rural setting, a CAS provides vital oversight and essential scaffolding through:

- **Navigating Bureaucratic Deadlines:** A CAS identifies specific grants or state-level funding opportunities often buried in high-volume "central office" communications. This ensures our rural schools receive their equitable share of resources that might otherwise be overlooked.
- **Facilitating Resource Sharing:** The CAS acts as a regional bridge, connecting small schools with larger neighbors to share specialized staff—such as Occupational Therapists or Student Services Coordinators (SSC). This collaborative model allows a rural school to provide high-level student services that a single, isolated budget could never afford alone.
- **Crisis Mediation:** They serve as a seasoned, neutral third party when sensitive community or parental issues arise. By providing the "political cover" and mediation expertise necessary in tight-knit communities, the CAS allows a new principal to maintain professional integrity while they are still building local trust.
- **Professional Calibration:** A CAS offers the "look around the corner" needed to anticipate seasonal challenges before they become emergencies. This includes seasonal challenges (like managing complex facility maintenance schedules and campus safety concerns) before they become emergencies.

Removing this role takes away the first person a new principal calls when they face a crisis they haven't seen before. We should be wrapping our new leaders in support, not stripping away their most accessible guide.

**Lack of Clarity on Reassignment (Section 17):** I am deeply troubled by the vagueness of Section 17 regarding how CAS duties would be reassigned. If the intent is to return to a District Superintendent model, we are effectively asking a smaller number of individuals to supervise a much larger number of schools. For a novice principal, this means less face-time with their supervisor and slower response times during emergencies. This is a recipe for systemic neglect and rapid burnout.

**Maintaining the Integrity of Professional Evaluation:** The proposed shift toward School Community Council (SCC) evaluations bypasses the professional, merit-based evaluation currently facilitated by the CAS. I am concerned that the principal selection process could be easily disrupted by a small number of disgruntled individuals rather than focused on professional competence. A new principal needs to know they are being judged on their educational leadership, not on their ability to navigate local political factions.

**Protecting the Voice of Rural Keiki:** Our rural schools may be small in numbers, but they are giants in the lives of our students. A CAS ensures that a school on the Neighbor Islands or in a rural pocket of Oahu isn't forgotten by a busy central office miles away. I worry that without this dedicated regional advocate, our novice principals will have to fight twice as hard just to be heard in Honolulu.

**A Sincere Reflection:** We often talk about "administrative layers," but in our rural communities, the CAS is a lifeline. I want to leave this profession knowing that the next principal of my school has the same shoulder to lean on that I did. I want them to feel supported, seen, and empowered to stay in this difficult but rewarding job for the long haul.

Please, I humbly ask the Committee to **hold SB 3334**. Let us keep the regional structures in place that allow our newest leaders—and our smallest schools—to thrive.

Mahalo for your time, your heart, and your dedication to the future of Hawaii's leadership.

Respectfully,



Noreen Kunitomo,  
Principal of Honaunau Elementary

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 9:04:33 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ned Uemae	Testifying for Department of Education	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate,

My name is Ned Uemae, and I serve as the Principal of Nu'uaniu Elementary School. I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 3334.

Our Complex Area Superintendent has been instrumental in advancing our complex area and supporting the continued growth of our schools. She understands the unique structures, strengths, and needs of each individual school and provides timely guidance and meaningful support to school administrators. Her leadership has been critical in helping principals navigate challenges, implement initiatives effectively, and remain focused on student achievement.

In addition, she plays an active and essential role in the school improvement process, ensuring alignment, accountability, and equitable support for all students. Eliminating this position would disrupt the progress we have made and weaken the system of support that enables schools to function effectively.

I am also concerned that removing this level of leadership while shifting full governance to School Community Councils (SCCs) would compromise the role of principals and create inconsistency in decision-making across schools. The Complex Area Superintendent provides a necessary balance of oversight, expertise, and coordination that ensures stability and student-centered leadership.

For these reasons, I strongly oppose Senate Bill 3334.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

## TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO S.B. NO. 3334 RELATING TO EDUCATION

**TO:** The Senate Committee on Education

**FROM:** Principal, Keaukaha Elementary School

**POSITION: OPPOSE S.B. NO. 3334; REQUEST THE COMMITTEE HOLD THIS BILL**

To the Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express my **strong opposition** to S.B. No. 3334, which proposes to repeal the position of the complex area superintendent (CAS). While the legislature seeks to "eliminate unnecessary administrative burdens," this proposal effectively dismantles the vital local support structure that Keaukaha Elementary relies on every day. **I respectfully request that the committee hold this bill.**

For our staff, the repeal of the CAS position means a **loss of direct, localized advocacy**. Currently, the CAS is responsible for helping our school obtain essential department services, including **fiscal management, personnel support, and facilities maintenance**. By replacing a dedicated local leader with a vague "administrative framework" or an "appropriate authority" designated by rule, this bill leaves our staff without a clear point of contact to resolve urgent operational issues.

Furthermore, this bill **centralizes power** in a way that undermines our school-level leadership. The Superintendent of Education would now have **final authority to appoint principals**, and our School Community Council's (SCC) evaluations would be sent directly to the state level rather than to a local superintendent who understands the unique Keaukaha community. If I, as a principal, have a disagreement with my SCC, the path for resolution becomes far more bureaucratic and removed from our campus.

The students of Keaukaha Elementary would be most affected by the **loss of local oversight for specialized services**. The CAS currently supervises **special education programs and monitoring** within our complex. Removing this layer of oversight risks slowing down the delivery of instruction and facilities for our most exceptional learners.

Additionally, critical student welfare decisions—such as **precluding a child from school** for disciplinary reasons or reviewing data on **student restraint**—would no longer be handled by a local CAS, but by a yet-to-be-determined "appropriate authority". This lack of clarity threatens the safety and stability of our learning environment.

S.B. No. 3334 moves our education system toward a **centralized, top-heavy structure** that ignores the specific needs of individual schools. By deleting the definition and role of the complex area superintendent, you are removing the very bridge that connects the state department to the students and staff at Keaukaha Elementary.

**Please hold this bill** to preserve local accountability and support for our schools.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "A. M. ...", written in a cursive style.

Principal Keaukaha Elementary School

February 12, 2026

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

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 3334. This bill fails to recognize the essential regional leadership that Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) provide to our schools.

The CAS has an incredible role in connecting our school's specific needs with state-level initiatives. Without this position, schools will lack the cohesive and regional strategy and support needed. The CAS has a strong understanding of the nuances of the schools in our local area and provides critical direct support to our campuses related to personnel, fiscal, facilities, curriculum and staff development, and specialized programs.

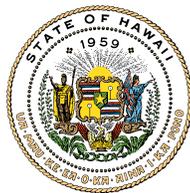
Reassigning the duties of the CAS to a smaller number of district-level staff is concerning. Schools face unique challenges of their community and without the direct, specific support of the CAS who closely works with and understands the schools, schools will be negatively impacted.

I urge the Committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain the current leadership structure, which includes the CAS, to ensure our schools receive the support needed.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Robyn Tom  
TA Vice Principal  
Roosevelt High School



**STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO  
THE MOANALUA COMPLEX**

2/11/26

Dear Madame Chair Kim,

We, the Principals of the Moanalua Complex, collectively submit this testimony to express our strong opposition to SB3334. Representing a diverse group of high-performing, military-impacted schools - including four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school - serving thousands of students and families in our community, we believe this bill would significantly compromise our ability to lead our schools effectively.

SB3334 seeks to abolish the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position to address "unclear authority structures" and "administrative burdens". From our perspective as school leaders on the ground, this proposal fails to account for the staggering scale of the Hawaii Department of Education. While the average school district in the United States serves roughly 5,000 students, a single Hawaii complex area typically oversees at least 1,900 employees, 10,000 students, and 19,000 parents.

Our collective concerns regarding the repeal of the CAS position include:

- **Unreasonable Scope of Responsibility:** This bill would redirect large-scale issues above the authority of Principals from 296 schools—representing over 165,000 students and 42,000 employees—directly to the State Superintendent. It is physically and administratively impossible for a single office to manage the nuanced, high-intensity problems of nearly 300 schools effectively.
- **Loss of Local Leadership:** The CAS serves as a vital intermediary, overseeing essential functions such as personnel, fiscal support, curriculum development, and special education programs within our specific complex areas. Removing this layer of leadership would leave us without the localized support necessary to navigate complex state and federal compliance. Removing this role would weaken effective support and responsiveness. The Complex Area Superintendent role provides timely, context-specific support that helps schools respond effectively to challenges. It remains unclear how the significant responsibilities currently managed at the complex level would be reassigned, and whether schools would receive the same level of responsiveness and clarity. We must thoughtfully consider whether removing regional leadership truly strengthens our system or unintentionally diminishes the support structures principals depend on to lead their schools effectively.

- Over Centralized/Decentralized Principal Selection: SB3334 proposes giving the State Superintendent final authority over all principal appointments. We believe that removing the CAS from this process—who has the most balanced knowledge of our schools' specific needs—will lead to a "one-size-fits-all" approach that ignores the unique culture of the Moanalua Complex. On the other side of this, the school community council authority structure is even more unclear than the authority of the CAS, which would lead to a contrary effect that the bill seeks.
- Strained Military Community Support: As the Moanalua Complex serves a significant military population, we are particularly concerned by the bill's proposal to replace CAS representation on the State Council on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. The CAS provides a consistent, high-level administrative voice that is essential for facilitating the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.

Our Complex Area Superintendents are already stretched thin, managing responsibilities that far exceed national averages. Removing them will not decrease administrative burden; it will create larger administrative issues, mostly in the form of a bottleneck at the state level that will ultimately harm our students and community. The CAS is the "bridge" within the Hawai'i Department of Education's tri-level structure. Abolishing this role does not diminish the administrative needs of our schools. It creates an unsustainable and dangerous consolidation of responsibility at the top.

The unique nature of our State Educational Agency and Local Educational Agency being one and the same, we are the ninth largest school district and the only statewide district in the nation. The sheer size of our district requires us to have the role of Complex Area Superintendent. Removing the CAS will not streamline the department; instead, it will trigger a systemic failure by redirecting high-intensity problems from nearly 300 schools, representing 165,000 students, directly to the State Superintendent. The only "physically and administratively impossible" for a single office to manage effectively.

As the unified leadership of the Moanalua Complex, we stand **STRONGLY OPPOSED** to SB3334 as it will contribute to the ultimate collapse of our educational system.

Sincerely,  
The Principals of the Moanalua Complex



Robin Martin- Principal, Moanalua High School



[Komarey Moss \(Feb 11, 2026 19:44:24 HST\)](#)

Komarey Moss- Principal, Moanalua Middle School



[Lynda Galera \(Feb 11, 2026 17:04:30 HST\)](#)

Lynda Galera- Principal, Moanalua Elementary School



[Tyler Brown \(Feb 11, 2026 13:12:16 HST\)](#)

Tyler Brown- Principal, Red Hill Elementary School



[Rory Vierra \(Feb 11, 2026 16:25:01 HST\)](#)

Rory Vierra- Principal, Shafter Elementary School



[Randall Galeon \(Feb 11, 2026 12:42:30 HST\)](#)

Randall Galeon- Principal, Salt Lake Elementary School

## To the Honorable Members of the State Legislature and the Senate Committee on Education,

We, the undersigned educational administrators who serve within the Complex Area structure of the Hawaii Department of Education, stand in **opposition** to the proposed measure (SB 3334) to repeal the position of Complex Area Superintendent (CAS). We urge this committee to reject this proposal, which we believe will dismantle a critical layer of accountability, support, and regional coherence that is essential to the success of the schools the CAS serves.

The Complex Area Superintendency is the keystone of regional support and effective local school governance within the DOE. As administrators working directly under the CAS, we recognize the indispensable role they play, which includes:

- **Direct and Local Supervision:** The CAS serves as the immediate supervisor for all principals within their geographical area, fostering a direct line of accountability and personalized mentorship that the State Superintendent's office cannot replicate for all 258 schools.
- **Operational Authority and Consistency:** The CAS possesses the full operational authority necessary to manage a cohesive system of high schools and their feeder schools. This structure ensures that policies, resources, and educational priorities are aligned across the entire complex, from kindergarten through graduation.
- **Essential Liaison:** The CAS is the vital link between the State Superintendent and the schools, translating broad state-level policy into practical, localized implementation strategies. This regional perspective ensures that the needs and challenges unique to our communities are directly communicated and addressed.

The proposal to centralize principal evaluations with the School Community Councils and vest appointment authority solely with the State Superintendent is a serious regression. While the spirit of local engagement is commendable, removing the CAS from the evaluation and decision-making process will create significant operational and supervisory gaps:

- **Loss of Educational Expertise:** Principals require evaluation from a seasoned educational leader—the CAS—who has the expertise and system-wide perspective necessary to assess their performance accurately and guide their professional development. The CAS structure ensures that leadership decisions are grounded in educational best practices, not solely on localized community input.
- **Overburdening the State Office:** Shifting the burden of all 258 principal evaluations and appointments to a single State Superintendent will inevitably lead to a distant, generalized, and less responsive oversight model. The CAS provides the regional focus necessary for effective, granular management.

The existing Complex Area structure ensures that critical decisions are made with knowledge of the local context and that our principals and schools have immediate, dedicated administrative support. Repealing the CAS position will decentralize accountability, centralize unmanageable oversight, and ultimately diminish the quality of service and support provided to our students and educators.

We implore the Committee to preserve the Complex Area Superintendent position and maintain this proven system of regional leadership.

**Sincerely,**

**Aiea-Moanalua-Radford Complex Area Educational Officers**

**TO:** The Honorable Senator Donna Mercado-Kim, Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education

**FROM:** Glen Iwamoto

Complex Area Human Resources Officer, Aiea-Moanalua-Radford Complex Area

**DATE:** Feb 12, 2026

**SUBJECT: Strong Opposition to SB3334 – Relating to the Department of Education**

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Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to respectfully but strongly oppose Senate Bill SB3334, which proposes to abolish the critical position of Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) from the Hawaii Department of Education. I currently serve as the Complex Area Human Resources Officer for the Aiea-Moanalua-Radford Complex Area, and as a former principal within this complex, I have firsthand experience with the indispensable role the CAS plays in supporting our schools and ensuring effective, localized management.

The Complex Area Superintendent is not merely an administrative layer; they are the essential bridge between the State Superintendent and the schools on the ground. The CAS is:

- **Responsible and Accountable:** They are directly responsible and accountable to the State Superintendent for the educational performance and efficient operations of every school within their complex area. Abolishing this position would create a massive, unmanageable span of control for the State Superintendent, diluting accountability and oversight.
- **A Critical Supervisory Link:** The CAS serves as the immediate supervisor to all school principals and educational officers within the complex area. This local supervision provides principals with immediate access to guidance, support, and accountability necessary to navigate the daily challenges of school leadership.
- **The Provider of Local Support:** My daily work, assisting the CAS with managing the schools, is endless and focused on providing immediate, localized support. As a former principal, I can personally attest to the vital support provided by our complex area office and our CAS. This local presence is crucial for handling complex human resources matters, operational issues, and providing tailored educational guidance that generic, centralized state-level support simply cannot replicate.

The work of a CAS is focused on ensuring that the specific needs of the complex area are met, which is a massive undertaking. Eliminating this position would dismantle the decentralized support structure that currently allows our complex areas to thrive. It would centralize all decision-making and support functions, overwhelming the state office and isolating school principals.

I urge this committee to recognize the fundamental importance of the Complex Area Superintendent position to the successful and efficient operation of Hawaii's public schools and to vote against SB3334.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Sincerely,

Glen Iwamoto

Complex Area Human Resources Officer

Aiea-Moanalua-Radford Complex Area

**Date:** 02/13/2026

**Time:** 1:05 PM

**Location:** Conference Room CR  
229 & Videoconference

**Committee:** Education (EDN)

**TO:** Chair Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee on Education

**DEPARTMENT:** Farrington/Kaiser/Kalani Complex Area

**BILL:** SB3334, Relating to Education Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Position

**TESTIFIER(S):** Farrington/Kaiser/Kalani Complex Area Principals

**POSITION:** OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS

Aloha Chair Mercado Kim and Members of the Committee,

We are writing to express our strong opposition to SB 3334. This bill removes something essential from our public education system: informed, responsive leadership that knows our schools, our communities, and our students.

While the intent may be to streamline the Department, the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) is not a layer of bureaucracy; it is a layer of connection. Our opposition is based on the following critical concerns:

1. Proximity, Trust, and the "Layer of Connection" within the Tri-Level Leadership

The CAS provides schools with clear, specific direction on how to improve instruction and strengthen systems. This guidance does not come from a distance; it comes from proximity, trust, and sustained relationships.

- Tailored Support: The CAS provides support to diverse school communities, each with unique cultural, academic, and socioeconomic needs.
- The "First Responder": This role responds in real-time to the situations that occur every day: the student in crisis, the staffing emergency, the family in need, or the school trying to do more with less. Removing this role creates a leadership vacuum that will be felt most sharply by students and educators who already face the greatest challenges.

2. Preserving the Integrity of Principal Selection

This bill centralizes principal hiring authority in a way that weakens local insight.

- Indispensable Perspective: Complex Area Superintendents bring deep knowledge of school culture and leadership capacity. This insight is vital when selecting principals who can truly serve their unique communities.
- Risks of Misalignment: Eliminating this perspective risks placing leaders without the necessary fit or experience to succeed. Furthermore, shifting 50% of the evaluation weight to School Community Councils (SCC) risks turning professional hiring into a popularity contest, overriding merit-based qualifications.

3. Operational Unfeasibility and Systemic Neglect

Hawaii's DOE is a unique, single statewide district overseeing 258 public schools. It is mathematically and operationally unreasonable to expect a centralized leadership structure in Honolulu to maintain a direct connection with individual principals while understanding the complexities of each individual school.

- Loss of Advocacy: Without a CAS, our schools risk becoming "islands of operation," lacking a direct line of advocacy at the state level. Each CAS understands the complexities and needs of individual schools through conversations with those at the school, walkthroughs and observations – these specific needs are brought back to the tri-level leadership giving schools voice.

- Systemic Overload: Reassigning these duties to a smaller number of individuals will lead to systemic neglect and inevitable leadership burnout at various levels.

#### 4. Preventing "Honolulu-Centric" Governance

For rural complexes and our colleagues on the Neighbor Islands, a hyper-centralized structure ignores our unique geographic and cultural challenges. In public education, structure is not about efficiency alone; it is about responsibility, responsiveness, and trust. The CAS embodies these values.

Removing this role does not streamline the system—it distances leadership from the people it is meant to serve. We respectfully urge the Committee to HOLD SB 3334 to maintain the regional leadership structure essential to school stability and student achievement.

Respectfully,

Farrington/Kaiser/Kalani Complex Principals

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

DATE: February 20, 2026

BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education; Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

POSITION: STRONGEST OPPOSITION

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

As sitting principals serving the rural communities of Ka‘ū, Kea‘au, and Pāhoā on the island of Hawai‘i, we are writing to express our unwavering opposition to SB 3334. While the stated intent of this bill is to reduce "administrative burdens," its implementation would achieve the exact opposite for our schools—increasing bureaucracy and removing the very leaders who truly understand the unique geographic and socio-economic challenges of our region.

Our opposition is rooted in the following critical concerns:

- **Loss of Essential Regional Leadership:** Our Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) are not "administrative layers"; they are the vital conduit connecting our specific school needs with state-level initiatives. In rural Hawaii Island, our CAS knows our community intimately. Eliminating this position severs the communication link between our "schoolhouses" and the Department's central leadership, leaving us as "islands of operation" without a direct line of advocacy.
- **Impractical Reassignment of Duties:** Section 17 of this bill is dangerously vague regarding how CAS duties would be reassigned. If these responsibilities return to a smaller number of district superintendents, the resulting span of control will lead to systemic neglect and professional burnout. For rural schools already facing resource scarcity, losing a dedicated regional leader will create more barriers to support, not fewer.
- **Compromising Principal Selection Integrity:** We strongly oppose giving School Community Councils (SCC) a 50% weight in principal selection. This creates "de facto" hiring power that contradicts existing union agreements. It bypasses the merit-based, professional evaluation currently facilitated by the CAS. Without regional oversight, the selection process risks being disrupted by small groups rather than focused on professional competence.
- **The Threat of "Honolulu-Centric" Governance:** Removing regional leadership threatens to centralize all power in Honolulu. For those of us on the Neighbor Islands, a hyper-centralized structure ignores our unique cultural and socio-economic realities. This bill risks creating a system that is entirely unaccountable to the specific rural communities it is meant to serve.

We feel deeply supported by our complex area leadership. They understand the heart of Ka‘ū, Kea‘au, and Pāhoā in a way a centralized office never could. We urge the Committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain the regional leadership structure that ensures our students and teachers receive the specialized support they require.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

The Principals of the Ka'ū-Kea'au-Pāhoa Complex Area

  
Jason Britt (Feb 12, 2026 09:07:18 HST)

Jason Britt  
Na'alehu Elementary

  
Sharon Beck (Feb 12, 2026 09:14:11 HST)

Sharon Beck  
Ka'ū High and Pahala Elementary

  
Adria Medeiros (Feb 12, 2026 09:21:28 HST)

Adria Medeiros  
Mountain View Elementary

  
Brandon Tanabe (Feb 12, 2026 09:31:53 HST)

Brandon Tanabe  
Kea'au Middle School

  
Andrew Scott (Feb 12, 2026 09:33:34 HST)

Andrew Scott  
Kea'au Elementary School



Dean Cevallos  
Kea'au High School

  
Kasey Eisenhour (Feb 12, 2026 09:37:18 HST)

Kasey Eisenhour  
Keonepoko Elementary School



Karrin Hauanio  
Pāhoa Elementary School



Kim Williamson  
Pāhoa High and Intermediate School

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 10:47:50 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jennifer Masutani	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose SB3334. Our Complex Area Superintendents provide critical leadership and support to our schools.

## **RE: Testimony in Opposition to SB 3334, Relating to Education**

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

My name is Jade Pham Wall, and I serve as a Vice Principal Intern in the Hawaii Department of Education. I am writing to you today not only as an educator, but as a proud public school graduate and a citizen with a profound stake in the future of our state.

I absolutely love my job. To me, being a Vice Principal is the best job in the world. When I was a teacher, I believed *that* was the best job in the world. I believe that regardless of your role in public education, you have a unique power to impact a child's life in ways that no other sector can, including through the roles of Principal, Complex Area Superintendent, and Superintendent. I am also here as an aspiring leader who envisions a Hawaii where our systems are built to last, and where the next generation of professionals is empowered to stay and serve our community.

### **A Vision for Collaborative Leadership**

I read this bill from front to back, and I want to acknowledge the clear intent behind it. I understand the desire to create more efficient systems, remove unnecessary red tape and barriers, and ensure a stronger community voice. These are essential components that I—and my fellow school leaders—agree on wholeheartedly.

I also understand that, if this bill passes, it will ultimately be the responsibility of the Hawaii Department of Education to figure out the “next steps” and rebuild what is removed, but that is not how systemic change should work when the stakes are this high and when the costs will be borne by our students and school communities. We can and should do better than passing the burden of unfinished policy down the line to be solved later, in real time, on the backs of leaders, teachers, and families—especially in the middle of the ongoing school crises we are experiencing right now.

I believe we can find a “win-win” solution that achieves the goals of efficiency and community voice without dismantling our existing support structures. It is our job as school-level leaders to be deeply involved in policy and decision-making. We do not want to be on the “other side” of this conversation; we want to be your partners. We want to be at the table helping to design the systems that support our students, rather than reacting to legislation that removes vital supports without a clear replacement.

Your role as legislators is to create systems of support for our communities. SB 3334, as written, eliminates the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position without putting in place any structure to carry forward the critical work that role provides.

### **The Stake of the Next Generation**

As an emerging school leader, I am acutely aware that the decisions made in this room today will shape the landscape of my career and the future of the state I call home. A group of us Vice Principal Interns recently had the opportunity to observe our Complex Area Superintendent, Linell Dilwith, in action, and the experience made clear just how essential this role is to the day-to-day health and long-term stability of our schools. By removing the CAS position without a clear, collaborative plan, this bill threatens to leave a gap in the vital functions that keep our schools supported, accountable, and stable:

- **Operational Oversight:** A single CAS manages the daily needs and crises of up to 28 principals. Without them, there is no direct line of localized support for our school communities.
- **Justice and Compliance:** CASs maintain a critical role in hearings and student appeals. They provide the oversight and safeguards needed to ensure policy is applied fairly and legally across all schools.
- **Loss of Local Context:** CASs understand the unique socio-economic and cultural needs of their specific complexes across our islands. Removing them creates a leadership vacuum and removes the first line of support for school communities, further distancing decision-making from the people and places most affected.

While we agree on increasing community input, SB 3334 would significantly expand School Community Councils' role in principal evaluation and selection by requiring their evaluation to count for half of the overall evaluation used in principal selection. These decisions should absolutely include SCC perspectives and lived experience, but they must remain grounded in clear professional standards, due process, and consistent expectations across the system. A stronger path forward would be to first listen to the very councils this bill seeks to elevate by surveying SCCs statewide to understand their capacity, training needs, and desire to take on these high-stakes responsibilities, so that any shift in authority does not set them up to fail. Only after hearing from them can we design a shared model that truly reflects community will, protects principals and schools from unintended politicization, and preserves a coherent, merit-based leadership pipeline across the state.

### **Conclusion**

I envision a Hawaii where our legislative and educational leaders work in tandem to build a more efficient, community-centered HIDOE. My stake in this is high—not just as an intern today, but as a leader who will be here for decades to come. I was raised in Hawaii's public schools and public housing, as an English learner from a disadvantaged background, and every opportunity I have today exists because this system chose to invest in me. I am a lead learner who has grown through this system, challenged it when it has fallen short, and worked from within to improve it in every role I have held. When we weaken the supports around our schools and make decisions without thorough consideration, we make it less likely that students who share my background will have the same chances I did. This is true of every political decision that touches public education.

I urge the committee to defer SB 3334 and invite us to the table as partners to find a solution that protects the stability of our schools while achieving our shared goals for Hawaii's future. Please allow those of us who live and work in these schools every day to help design the structures that will carry our students, and our communities, forward. I ask that you make space not only for seasoned leaders in high-level roles, but also for emerging school-level leaders like me—those still growing through the system—so we can learn alongside you, contribute our on-the-ground perspective, and help build a future that keeps Hawaii's young professionals here, serving the communities that raised us.

Mahalo for your time, your dedication to Hawaii's students, and for considering our desire to work alongside you.

Sincerely,



Jade Pham Wall, MEdT  
Vice Principal, Ala Wai Elementary School  
National Board Certified Teacher; National Milken Educator  
PhD Student, Exceptionalities in Education

## **Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill 3334**

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate,

My name is Lorelei Aiwohi, and I am the proud principal of Kaimuki High School. I have had the privilege of serving as a school administrator in Hawai‘i for over twenty years. Throughout my career—as a teacher, vice principal, and principal—I have worked in close partnership with students, families, faculty, and state leadership to strengthen our schools. I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 3334.

Over two decades in educational leadership have taught me that strong schools depend on strong systems. While I deeply value community engagement and shared decision-making, SB3334 proposes structural changes that would significantly disrupt the leadership stability and coherence that our public schools rely upon. Specifically, I am concerned about the elimination of Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) positions and the proposed changes to principal evaluation and hiring procedures involving School Community Councils (SCCs).

### **Elimination of CAS Positions**

Hawai‘i’s statewide public school system is unique. Because we operate as a single, centralized district, the role of the Complex Area Superintendent is essential. CAS provides instructional leadership, operational oversight, and system alignment that ensure equity and consistency across schools.

Throughout my career, I have relied on CAS not as an intermediary layer, but as a critical partner. They provide guidance during crisis situations, support in complex personnel matters, direction in implementing state and federal mandates, and alignment around instructional priorities. Removing CAS positions would:

- Disrupt the leadership pipeline and mentorship structure for principals.
- Increase fragmentation across complex areas and campuses.
- Place additional compliance and operational burdens on school leaders.
- Weaken coordinated responses to student achievement, safety, and accountability initiatives.

Experienced principals understand that leadership does not operate in isolation. The CAS structure provides coherence in a system that must serve diverse communities across islands. Eliminating this role would create instability rather than empowerment.

### **Changes to Principal Evaluation and Hiring Procedures**

SB3334’s proposal to expand SCC involvement in principal evaluation and hiring also raises serious concerns.

School Community Councils play an important advisory role in shaping school vision and ensuring community voice. However, personnel evaluation and hiring processes require specific expertise, legal understanding, and adherence to labor agreements and statewide standards. These processes involve confidentiality, professional judgment, and consistency across the system.

In my experience, effective principal evaluation must be grounded in instructional leadership standards, data analysis, and systemwide priorities—not subject to varying levels of local training or shifting community dynamics. Expanding SCC authority into these areas risks:

- Compromising confidentiality and professional integrity.
- Creating inconsistencies across schools.
- Politicizing leadership decisions.
- Blurring accountability within our centralized governance structure.

As a veteran administrator, I recognize that leadership selection and evaluation must remain within a structured, professionally trained framework to ensure fairness, equity, and stability.

### **Conclusion**

SB3334 is well-intended in its desire to increase community involvement. However, after more than twenty years in Hawai‘i’s public school system, I believe these proposed changes would weaken—not strengthen—our schools. Effective leadership depends on stability, coherence, and clearly defined roles within a unified statewide system.

I respectfully urge the Senate to reconsider SB3334 and instead engage principals, Complex Area Superintendents, educators, and community stakeholders in meaningful dialogue about how we can strengthen leadership structures without dismantling the systems that support student success.

Mahalo for your service to our state and for your continued commitment to Hawai‘i’s public school students and families.

Respectfully,

*Lorelei Aiwohi*

Lorelei Aiwohi  
Principal  
Kaimuki High School

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 11:16:24 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Walker Rowsey	Testifying for Kids Hurt Too Hawaii	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairperson Kidani, Vice Chair McKelvey, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Walker Rowsey, and I testify today not just as an advocate, but as a witness. I represent **Kids Hurt Too Hawaii**, an organization that holds the hands of children who are navigating trauma, grief, and instability. We see the raw, daily reality of what happens when systems fail kids—and we also see what happens when systems get it right.

I am writing in **strong opposition to SB3334**, which seeks to eliminate the role of Complex Area Superintendents. To put it plainly: if you pass this bill, you are not streamlining bureaucracy. You are severing the lifeline between our most vulnerable rural communities and the decision-makers who actually know our children’s names.

**1. In Rural Communities, the CAS is the Difference Between Being Seen and Being Invisible.**

On paper, a Complex Area Superintendent is an administrator. In reality, on the Wai‘anae Coast, in Ka‘ū, in Lāna‘i, and in Hāna, the CAS is the **boots on the ground**. They are the ones driving the winding roads to attend a community meeting about the rise of youth vaping. They are the ones sitting in the back of the church hall listening to grandmothers raising their grandchildren beg for more mental health support.

When you remove the CAS, you remove the only cabinet-level official whose sole job is to know *this* valley, *this* shoreline, *this* specific intersection of poverty and potential. A superintendent in Honolulu cannot feel the dust of drought-stricken Ka‘ū or the salt spray of Wai‘anae. Our CASs do. They carry that dust and salt with them into every budget meeting and every policy vote.

**2. One-Size-Fits-All is a One-Size-Fits-All Failure.**

SB3334 operates under the dangerous illusion that education is a utility, like water pressure—consistent and uniform across the board. But we know better. The needs of a child in Nānākuli are not identical to the needs of a child in Kaimukī. Our kids in rural Hawai‘i face unique barriers: transportation insecurity, generational trauma, lack of access to specialized providers, and the highest rates of housing instability.

Complex Area Superintendents allow us to **customize the cure**. Under their leadership, a complex area can pivot quickly. When Kids Hurt Too Hawaii identifies a spike suicidal ideation in students in a specific region, we don't have to wait for a statewide mandate. The CAS can authorize immediate action, adjust policies for grieving students, and coordinate with local organizations to mount a rapid response. They are the **quarterback** of the child's support system. Without them, we are just a scattered team running in different directions.

### **3. Proximity is Power.**

You cannot love a child from 200 miles away, and you cannot serve them effectively from a central office. Our Complex Area Superintendents live here. Their children play on our sports teams. They shop at our local markets. They know that when a bus route is cancelled, it isn't just a logistical issue—it is a family crisis that determines whether a hungry child eats breakfast.

Kids Hurt Too Hawaii has worked alongside CASs who have spent decades serving their communities, and personally check in on families when needed. We have seen CASs allocate discretionary funds to support critical student support services. These are not line items on a spreadsheet; they are acts of love. And they are only possible because the CAS has the **autonomy and the intimacy** to see the need and act immediately.

We understand the desire to streamline. We understand the pressure to cut costs. But eliminating Complex Area Superintendents is not efficiency, it is amputation. You would be cutting off the hands and feet of our rural schools and asking them to run a marathon.

Please do not silence the voices of our communities. Please do not force our keiki into a system that sees them as data points rather than as children with unique stories and specific struggles.

**We urge you to hold SB3334.** Stand with our Complex Area Superintendents. Stand with the rural families who rely on them. Stand with the kids who are hurting and the advocates fighting to help them heal.

Mahalo for your time and your heart.

Walker Rowsey

Kids Hurt Too Hawaii

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 11:21:39 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Douglas Boyer	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I respectfully oppose SB 3334. This bill does not fully recognize the essential intermediary leadership that Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) provide within Hawai‘i’s uniquely structured statewide district—particularly for rural and Neighbor Island communities.

As you are aware, Hawai‘i operates as a single statewide school system. In most other states, district superintendents serve as the bridge between the state education agency and individual schools. In Hawai‘i, Complex Area Superintendents fulfill that same role. Educational research consistently shows that leadership is second only to classroom instruction in its impact on student achievement. Effective district-level leadership strengthens outcomes by aligning goals, building professional capacity, ensuring accountability, and supporting coherent implementation of policy. Removing this layer risks creating disconnection, inconsistency in service delivery, and diminished responsiveness to local needs.

This issue is especially significant for Maui County and the Neighbor Islands. The current Maui structure intentionally divides schools between two Complex Area Superintendents. One CAS supports Lahaina schools, Lāna‘i, Moloka‘i, and Hāna—communities that share geographic isolation and similar logistical realities—while the other oversees the remaining Maui schools. This structure allows for focused supervision, sustained relationship-building, and meaningful leadership development with principals. It enables the CAS to build capacity across all facets of school leadership, including instructional improvement, fiscal oversight, staffing, compliance, facilities and operational management, and campus safety.

Section 17 of SB3334 does not clearly define how these responsibilities would be reassigned or supervised. CASs currently conduct principal evaluations, oversee compliance with federal and state mandates, coordinate statewide initiatives, and provide oversight and advocacy in areas such as campus safety and facilities. Removing the statutory CAS role without clearly establishing an equally defined and accountable replacement structure creates ambiguity in leadership authority at a time when clarity and continuity are essential. If governance were consolidated into a single district-level point of contact for Maui and the Neighbor Islands, the scope of responsibility would expand substantially. Oversight across multiple islands, emergency response coordination, personnel matters, operational facility management, principal supervision, and school safety concerns would compete simultaneously for attention. Concentrating this

responsibility within one structure risks operational strain, reduced responsiveness, and gaps in oversight—particularly during urgent situations.

For rural and Neighbor Island schools, regional leadership is not an added layer of bureaucracy—it is the mechanism that ensures statewide policy is translated responsibly into local practice. Greater centralization may unintentionally reduce the level of regional responsiveness that geographically isolated communities rely upon. Hawai‘i’s complex area structure was designed to bring leadership closer to schools across all islands. Preserving that connection helps ensure that decision-making remains informed by the diverse realities within our statewide system.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to hold SB 3334 and preserve the regional leadership structure that supports accountability, builds principal capacity, and ensures safe, high-functioning campuses across Maui County and the Neighbor Islands.

Respectfully,

Douglas Boyer  
Principal  
Lāna‘i High & Elementary School

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 11:25:19 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Michael Zalopany	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Written Testimony**

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education; Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions**

**POSITION: Opposition & Comments**

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

**I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 3334. Eliminating Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) positions would remove a foundational pillar of Hawaii's Department of Education, creating a dangerous leadership vacuum within the HIDOE.**

**The CAS provides essential leadership at the complex level, ensuring that school systems run efficiently and effectively. Removing this layer of oversight would be akin to driving an automobile with a leaky brake line: the system may continue to move, but it loses the ability to stop, pivot, or maintain safety. Rather than continually "adding brake fluid" to a strained system, we must maintain the structural integrity of our leadership.**

**CAS leadership ensures student success by addressing unique local needs and providing our communities with a strong, direct voice in the department. I urge you to keep our CAS positions intact to ensure the stability of our schools.**

**Thank you for your time and for considering my testimony.**

**Respectfully,**

**Michael G. Zalopany**

**Vice Principal, Roosevelt High School**

## Testimony in Opposition to SB 3334

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate,

As a parent with children currently enrolled in our public schools, I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 3334. While I appreciate the Legislature's interest in community engagement, this bill introduces changes that would destabilize my child's school and remove the very safety nets that ensure our schools run smoothly.

My concerns as a parent are twofold:

### 1. The Loss of Regional Support (Elimination of CAS)

The Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) is often viewed by the public as "administration," but to parents, the CAS represents accountability and stability. When there is a crisis at a school that a principal cannot handle alone, the CAS is the first responder who provides the resources and authority to keep our children safe.

**Consistency:** Without a CAS, I worry that a child's quality of education will depend entirely on which school they happen to be in, rather than a cohesive system that ensures every school in our area meets the same high standards.

**Burdens on Principals:** I want my child's principal focused on teachers and students, not drowning in the state-level paperwork that the CAS currently handles. Eliminating this role doesn't cut "red tape" it just moves the red tape onto the principal's desk.

### 2. Politicizing School Leadership (Principal Hiring/Evaluations)

I value the School Community Council, but there is a massive difference between advising and managing personnel.

**Confidentiality and Fairness:** Principal evaluations involve sensitive personnel data and labor agreements. I do not believe it is appropriate or fair to put parent volunteers or community members in a position where they are judging a professional's career without the proper training in educational standards or labor law.

**School Stability:** I fear this change will turn principal hiring into a popularity contest or a political debate within our neighborhoods. Our schools need the most qualified instructional leaders, not just the ones who are best at navigating local politics.

**Equity:** Not every school has an SCC with the same level of resources or time. This proposal risks creating a "two-tier" system where schools with highly active, professional SCCs have more power than those in high-need or struggling communities.

We all want a better Department of Education, but dismantling the leadership structure (CAS) and complicating the way we hire principals (SCC) will only lead to confusion and turnover. For the sake of my child's classroom stability, I respectfully urge the Committee to reject SB 3334.

Mahalo for your time and for your commitment to our keiki.

Respectfully,

Gina Tana

Honolulu District Parent

**To:** Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair; Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

**Date:** February 13, 2026

**Time:** 1:05 PM

**Bill No:** SB 3334, Relating to Education; Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**Testifier:** Carli Miyashiro

**Position:** Opposition and Comments

Aloha e Chair Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 3334, which proposes repealing the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position and centralizing principal appointments under the State Superintendent. While the goal of reducing administrative burden is noble, this bill, as written, threatens the stability of our schools and the unique needs of our diverse island communities.

I oppose this measure for the following reasons:

1. The CAS is the primary link between the state's centralized Department of Education and the specific needs of our local schools. In our unique statewide district, the CAS serves as the primary link between the state's centralized leadership and the highly specific needs of local schools. Each complex area has a unique fingerprint and distinct needs. The CAS provides regional oversight to support a smooth educational transition for students moving between levels of education (elementary, middle, and high).
2. SB 3334 lacks clarity regarding the reassignment of CAS duties. If the responsibilities are consolidated into a broader "District" model, it may be logistically unsound to expect one person to support the entire District. For example, the Leeward District has 44 schools. One leader for all of those schools would lead to neglect, since you cannot effectively oversee the professional development and operational needs of that many schools.
3. The Hawaii Department of Education (HIDOE) is currently grappling with declining enrollment, teacher shortages, administrator shortages, and a possible redistricting. A massive structural overhaul at this movement creates unnecessary instability. The removal of the CAS would disrupt the steady progress schools have made since the pandemic. Progress made possible only by the direct guidance, support, and mentoring provided by the CAS.

In my administrative career, I have served as a Complex Academic Officer (CAO) under the guidance and leadership of a CAS, my direct supervisor. This experience was invaluable in seeing firsthand how a CAS positively impacts schools. A CAS does more than oversee; they

mentor, provide immediate advice to move school initiatives forward, and ensure that communications flow both to and from the Superintendent's office. A CAS truly knows a school's strengths and its neighborhood's needs.

In conclusion, each complex area requires a dedicated regional leader to navigate its unique challenges. SB 3334 moves in the opposite direction, threatening to centralize all authority in Honolulu.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that you hold SB 3334.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carli', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Carli Miyashiro  
Vice Principal  
Ho'okele Elementary

# Strong Opposition to SB 3334

**Re: Strong Opposition to SB 3334 – Relating to the Department of Education**

Hearing Date: Friday, 2/13/26, at 1:05 pm

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

Our names are Desiré DeSoto and Lianne Hee. We are generational community members and career educators in the **Nānākuli-Wai'anae Complex Area**. We are submitting testimony in **strong opposition** to SB 3334.

## **Hawai'i's Unique Statewide System Demands More Local Voice, Not Less**

Hawai'i is the **only state in the nation with a single, statewide public school system**. That means all our schools — from Hilo to Hāna to Nānākuli and Wai'anae — are governed centrally by the Hawai'i Department of Education.

Because of this centralized structure, a critical check-and-balance has been the existence of **Complex Area Superintendents (CAS)** who ideally:

- Understand the **specific communities** they serve
- Build **long-term relationships** with families, schools, and local organizations
- Can respond to **place-based needs** rather than one-size-fits-all policies

SB 3334 proposes eliminating **Complex Area Superintendents** and consolidating even more authority at the top into a single Superintendent. In a statewide system that already lacks true local school districts, this bill moves us further away from community-driven education and closer to a detached, bureaucratic model that does not fit Hawai'i.

## **A Centralized Superintendent Cannot Know Every Community Across Our Island Chain**

The idea that **one centralized Superintendent** can meaningfully understand and respond to the diverse needs of every community across our island chain is unrealistic.

- The needs of **Nānākuli-Wai'anae** are not the same as those of urban Honolulu, East Hawai'i, or Kaua'i.
- Our communities face **unique challenges and possess unique strengths** — including high rates of poverty, generational trauma, disenfranchised Native Hawaiian student needs, and powerful community-based organizations that partner with schools.
- Effective leadership here requires **deep familiarity** with local families, culture, history, and long-standing community efforts.

By removing Complex Area Superintendents, SB 3334 effectively says: *“We trust a central office more than the people closest to the communities.”* That is the wrong direction for Hawai'i's only statewide school system.

## **We Need to Break Up HIDOE Power, Not Concentrate It**

Instead of eliminating CAS positions, Hawai'i should move toward **decentralizing** HIDOE and **strengthening community representation** in decision-making.

I urge the Legislature to consider a different structure, such as:

1. **Retaining or reimagining complex-level leadership**, and perhaps
2. **Having Complex Area leaders selected, evaluated, or overseen by boards of community members** who have a vested interest in the schools — parents, local educators, community organization representatives, and residents from that complex area.

In other words, if HIDOE continues to be one statewide system, then **real local governance must come from the community level**, not from an increasingly powerful central office. Complex Area leadership should be accountable first and foremost to the community they serve.

## Lived Reality: Weak Parent Voice and Participation

On my coast in the **Nānākuli-Wai'anae** area, I have seen firsthand that the existing structures that are supposed to provide “local voice” — such as **School Community Councils (SCCs)** — are often not functioning as true avenues for community input.

- SCC meetings typically have **poor to almost no participation** from regular parents.
- The primary participants are often those who are already closely tied to the school or, at times, appear to rely **on the Principal in their work**.
- This dynamic **discourages dissent** and makes it hard for everyday families to feel safe raising concerns or challenging decisions.

When parents don't feel genuinely welcome or safe to speak, **we cannot pretend that SCCs are providing meaningful community governance**.

If anything, this is an argument for **stronger, independent community oversight** of complex-level leadership — not for stripping away a layer of local leadership and consolidating more power into a single Superintendent's hands.

## Community-Based Boards for Complex Areas

Rather than abolishing Complex Area Superintendents, I urge you to:

- Explore **breaking up the HIDOE's authority** into **more community-governed regions**, starting with Complex Areas.
- Allow **Complex Area Superintendents (or equivalent roles)** to be:
  - a. Selected through a process that **includes a board of community members** from that complex, and
  - b. Held accountable to that board in collaboration with the Board of Education.

This would create a structure in which the people making the most important decisions for our schools are those with a **real, lived investment** in our keiki and our communities — not just those in central offices in Honolulu.

## Conclusion

Because Hawai'i is the **only statewide school system in the country**, you have a special responsibility to ensure our structure does not silence or sideline local voices.

- **Eliminating Complex Area Superintendents**, as SB 3334 proposes, will **further centralize power**, widen the gap between decision-makers and families, and make it even harder for communities like **Nānākuli-Wai'anae** to be heard.
- We should be moving toward **community-based, place-based governance**, not away from it.
- I respectfully ask you to **hold SB 3334** and instead pursue reforms that **increase local control and community accountability** within our statewide system.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify and for your consideration.

Desiré DeSoto

Lianne Hee

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 12:14:08 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Justin Brown	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

**My name is Justin Brown. I am a long-time teacher on the Big Island. I am writing in strong support of SB 3334.**

**In my career, I have worked with many Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) who are hardworking individuals. However, we must distinguish between the people and the structure. The current tri-level leadership structure is simply not delivering the outcomes our students deserve. The goal of this bill, as I read it, is to separate administrative compliance from educational direction. I understand there is a belief that the CAS positions handle a lot of "unsexy" bureaucracy (Title IX compliance, teacher disciplinary hearings, and civil rights complaints). If you eliminate the CAS, who does that work? These functions could be centralized administrative services (like HR or Legal specializing in these areas) rather than instructional leadership layers.**

**1. Resource Concentration vs. Stagnant Growth**

**Since our current seniors entered the DOE, many complex areas have significantly expanded their administrative staff. If this concentration of resources had led to "tremendous growth" in critical success indicators, this bill would not be before you today. But we have not seen that growth.**

- The Reality: While administrative layers have grown, families are increasingly seeking alternatives in charter, private, and AI-based schooling.**
- The Consequence: This exodus erodes the capacity of our local public schools and creates a disconnect between schools and the communities they serve.**

**2. From "Conduits" to "Bottlenecks"**

**While administrators argue that the tri-level structure is a "conduit," in the digital age, it is more accurately understood as a bottleneck.**

- A 20th-century management model is obsolete for 21st-century needs.**

- **By removing this middle-management layer, funding and decision-making power can flow more directly from the Legislature to the local school communities who are ultimately responsible for student outcomes.**

### **3. Autonomy Over Alignment**

**Currently, downward pressure from the CAS often forces schools to align their work with "Complex Area Projects" rather than what is best for the specific students in the building.**

- **The Conflict: I have heard from many school leaders who wish to innovate with their teachers to address local campus needs, but they are prevented from doing so because it contradicts "Complex Direction."**
- **The Solution: This bill decentralizes authority to the Principals and School Community Councils (SCC). It shifts accountability away from a career supervisor and places it firmly in the hands of the teachers, parents, and local leaders who know their students (and their needs) best.**

### **4. Embracing Constructive Disruption**

**Empowering the SCC to guide a school's path feels "disruptive" to those within the current system. The system works well for these people; however, given our current trajectory, system disruption is exactly what is needed. Systems optimize for the incentives their leaders perceive to matter most; it is time we change those incentives to favor local innovation and community resilience. Critics argue that SCCs are not ready for this authority. I argue that their current lack of engagement is a direct result of their lack of power. When you give a community a real vote in their school's leadership, you will see a revitalization of involvement. Agency drives engagement.**

**SB 3334 is a critical step toward ensuring that the best school in the world for a Hawaii student to attend is their local public school. I respectfully urge the Committee to pass this measure.**

**If we keep doing what we have been doing, we will get the same results. It is time to try something to get different results and I believe this measure is a good step in that direction.**

**Best Regards and Warmest Aloha,**

**Justin Brown**

**Date:** Friday, February 13, 2026

**Time:** 1:05 pm

**Location:** Conference Room CR 229 & Videoconference

**Committee:** EDN

**BILL:** SB 3334, Relating to Education: Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**TESTIFIER(S):**

Dr. Aletha Sutton, Autism District Educational Specialist (DES): Windward District

Syndey Wickland, School-Base Behavioral Health (SBBH) District Educational Specialist (DES):  
Kailua-Kalaheo Complex

Nathan French, School-Base Behavioral Health (SBBH) District Educational Specialist (DES):  
Kailua-Kalaheo Complex

LeeAnn Pule-Viernes, IDEA, and 504 District Educational Specialist (DES): Kailua-Kalaheo  
Complex

Randolph Scoville, IDEA, and 504 District Educational Specialist (DES): Castle-Kahuku  
Complex

**POSITION:** STRONG OPPOSITION AND URGENT CONCERNS

Chair Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Esteemed Members of the Committee:

This testimony is submitted in strong opposition to SB 3334. As the District Educational Specialists overseeing Autism, School-Based Behavioral Health, Section 504, and Special Education, the Windward District, we assert that eliminating the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position will critically compromise the specialized regional infrastructure responsible for ensuring the statutory rights and educational success of our most vulnerable students.

While the measure's intent is ostensibly to "reduce administrative burdens," it fundamentally disregards the specialized regional leadership required to ensure the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students with disabilities, as mandated by state and federal law.

1. Compromise of Legal Compliance and Procedural Integrity.

The loss of the Complex Area Superintendent directly jeopardizes the Department of Education's ability to fulfill its non-delegable legal obligations. The CAS and its Complex Area Support Team function as the essential administrative and oversight link for the successful implementation of the following key mandates:

- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):** The CAS provides the regional leadership necessary to ensure the fidelity of FAPE implementation, including resource allocation, monitoring of individualized education program (IEP) development, and resolving local conflicts before they escalate to formal written complaints or due process hearings. Elimination of this oversight increases the risk of systemic non-compliance with

federal mandates.

- **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) & Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act:** The CAS structure is integral to ensuring non-discrimination and providing appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities and eligible students under Section 504. Removing this leadership layer diffuses accountability and complicates the centralized management of these civil rights protections.
- **HIDOE Chapter 60 (Pupil Services) and Chapter 61 (Special Education):** These administrative rules govern the standards and procedures for delivering specialized services within the Hawai'i Department of Education. The CAS oversees the District Educational Specialists, who ensure that state-level policies are accurately and uniformly implemented at the school level. Removing this position would sever the procedural link, resulting in inconsistent application of these critical state rules across complex areas.

## 2. Fragmentation of Essential Support Systems

The Complex Area Superintendent does not work in isolation; they lead a unified support team that is vital to school improvement, curriculum, professional development, and special education. Eliminating the CAS will dismantle this cohesive team structure, leaving school-level administrators and educators without the necessary, coordinated support to meet the diverse, legally mandated needs of students with special needs.

## 3. Heightened Risk of Centralized and Inflexible Governance

Removing complex-area leadership risks and consolidating administrative authority entirely within Honolulu. This centralized approach is ill-equipped to address the unique geographic, economic, and cultural challenges faced by complex areas such as Kailua-Kalaheo. The resulting system may lack the accountability and local responsiveness required to meet families' specific needs and ensure equitable access to educational programs.

We respectfully urge the Committee to **HOLD** SB 3334. Maintaining the complex-area leadership structure is an essential administrative safeguard for the rights and success of students with disabilities and for ensuring procedural compliance under federal and state law.

Mahalo for the opportunity to present this testimony.

Respectfully Submitted,



Aletha Sutton

District Educational Specialist, Autism DES: Windward District



Sydney Wickland

School-Base Behavioral Health (SBBH) District Educational Specialist (DES): Kailua-Kalaheo Complex

*Nathan French*

Nathan French

School-Base Behavioral Health (SBBH) District Educational Specialist (DES): Kailua-Kalaheo Complex



LeeAnn Pule-Viernes

District Educational Specialist, IDEA and 504 DES: Kailua-Kalaheo Complex

*Randolph Scoville*

Randolph Scoville

District Educational Specialist, IDEA and 504 DES: Castle-Kahuku Complex



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO  
WAIPAHAU HIGH SCHOOL  
94-1211 FARRINGTON HIGHWAY  
WAIPAHAU, HI 96797  
(808) 307-9555

**Department: Department of Education Waipahu Complex**

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions**

**TESTIFIER(S): Waipahu Complex Principals - Alika Ahu, Pat Anbe, Alvan Fukuhara, Shanell Kagamida, Stacy Kawamura, Kai Kuboyama, Hanh Nguyen, Zachary Sheets**

**POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

We are writing to express our opposition to SB 3334. While we understand the intent to reduce "administrative burdens," this bill fails to recognize the essential leadership that Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) provide—particularly for rural and underserved communities.

Our opposition is based on three critical concerns:

### **1. Erosion of the Tri-Level Leadership Framework**

Beyond simple administration, the CAS acts as a crucial lifeline between grassroots school needs and state initiatives. Eliminating this position would essentially sever the direct line of communication between the schools and DOE state leadership. This leaves schools isolated without a shared direction, and more importantly, a representative to champion their specific needs at the top level.

### **2. Impact on Student Achievement/Well-Being: Concern regarding the unilateral abolishment of CAS duties/responsibilities and localized support**

If this bill passes, it removes the CAS position without any clear answers about what comes next. Section 17 of the bill is vague as to how CAS duties and responsibilities would be reassigned. Specifically, one of the many responsibilities of the CAS is to oversee school improvement processes and plans for every school in the complex area. These plans have a direct impact on how schools address student achievement and well being. Removing the position without a specific plan or structure will create a gap in communication and support.

Another example to illustrate this point: When updates to the delivery of special education services occur, our CAS provides the localized oversight necessary to ensure our teachers are

#### **AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER**

##### **Continuous Notice of Non-Discrimination**

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Civil Rights Compliance Branch, Hawaii State Department of Education, P.O. Box 2360, Honolulu, Hawaii 96804, (808) 784-6325 or relay [CRCB@k12.hi.us](mailto:CRCB@k12.hi.us). Beth Schimmelfennig, Director, Rhonda Wong, Compliance, Anna Tsang, Title VI, Blue Kaanehe, Title VII, Nicole Isa-Iijima, Title IX, Krysti Sukita, ADA/504, Dana Takahra-Dias, Title IX- Gender Equity in Athletics, Alphonso Braggs, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

properly trained and that all of our schools remain in legal compliance with federal mandates. Without this middle-tier support, a crisis—such as a sudden staffing shortage or a complex IEP (Individualized Education Program) dispute—would be funneled to a centralized Superintendent’s office that is managing hundreds of schools. The resulting delay in guidance would not only stall our instructional progress but could leave the Department vulnerable to legal challenges, ultimately diverting precious resources away from the students who need them most.

We strongly oppose this change.

### 3. Improper Expansion of School Community Council (SCC) Authority

We oppose the proposal to assign a 50% weight to SCC evaluations in the principal selection process for several critical reasons. This change effectively grants SCCs hiring authority that violates current labor agreements and union contracts. Second, it undermines the objective, merit-based assessment managed by the CAS. SCC members are not trained in the stewardship of school operations - budget management protocols, personnel legalities, state performance standards, or state-mandated evaluation frameworks, to name a few. In addition, high turnover in SCC membership will reduce our capacity as principals to execute multi-year plans, which ultimately would be detrimental to student achievement and longitudinal growth for students. While well intentioned, shifting evaluation and hiring of principals to a lay council risks turning professional evaluations into subjective measures of popularity or reaction to singular, localized issues.

Consequently, we ask the Committee to hold SB 3334 and preserve the area leadership necessary for providing our students and staff with tailored and timely support. Thank you for considering this testimony.

Respectfully,

  
Zachary Sheets  
Principal, Waipahu High School

  
Hanh Nguyen  
Principal, August Ahrens Elementary School

  
Alika Ahu  
Principal, Kalei’opu’u Elementary School

  
Kai Kuboyama  
Principal, Waipahu Elementary School  
Adult

  
Alvan Fukuhara  
Principal, Waipahu Intermediate School

  
Stacy Kawamura  
Principal, Honowai Elementary School

  
Shanell Kagamida  
Principal, Waikele Elementary School

  
Pat Anbe  
Principal, Waipahu Community School for  
Adult

### AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

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Civil Rights Compliance Branch, Hawaii State Department of Education, P.O. Box 2360, Honolulu, Hawaii 96804, (808) 784-6325 or relay [CRCB@k12.hi.us](mailto:CRCB@k12.hi.us), Beth Schimmelfennig, Director, Rhonda Wong, Compliance, Anna Tsang, Title VI, Blue Kaanehe, Title VII, Nicole Isa-Iijima, Title IX, Krysti Sukita, ADA/504, Dana Takahra-Dias, Title IX- Gender Equity in Athletics, Alphonso Braggs, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

**Department: Waikoloa Elementary and Middle School**

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education** Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**TESTIFIER(S): Michelle Barber, Tonya Duncan, Cassandra Lambert, Summer Pila, and Sarah Uehara**

**POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

We are writing to express our opposition to SB 3334. While we understand the intent to reduce "administrative burdens," this bill fails to recognize the essential regional leadership that Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) provide—particularly for rural and underserved communities.

**Opposition to SB 3334**

**1. Erosion of the Tri-Level Leadership Framework:** The CAS is not merely an administrative layer; they are the vital conduit connecting individual school needs with state-level initiatives. Eliminating this position severs the communication link between the "schoolhouse" and the Department of Education's central leadership. Without a CAS, our schools risk becoming "islands of operation," lacking a cohesive regional strategy or a direct line of advocacy at the state level.

**2. Lack of Structural Detail and Increased School-Level Burden:** Section 17 of the bill is dangerously vague regarding how CAS duties would be reassigned. The current proposal fails to provide a concrete structure to replace the CAS. We are deeply concerned that this lack of detail will result in the school level being more heavily burdened with administrative responsibilities while simultaneously having fewer resources and less regional support to manage them.

Hawaii Island in particular is very large geographically and although our population is not as large as Oahu, the distance alone would make it difficult for less than three people to lead. Waikoloa is already geographically isolated from other communities and we are concerned that this would further isolate us from leadership.

**3. Improper Expansion of School Community Council (SCC) Authority:** The bill proposes giving SCC evaluations a 50% weight in principal selection. We oppose this shift for several reasons:

- **Expertise vs. Advocacy:** As noted by HPAC, SCC members often speak from the perspective of emotional advocates rather than education experts. While community input is vital, a 50% weight allows non-professional sentiment to override pedagogical and administrative merit.

- **Integrity of Evaluation:** This shift bypasses the professional evaluation currently facilitated by the CAS. Without regional oversight, the selection process risks being disrupted by a small number of vocal individuals rather than focusing on professional competence.
- **Contractual Conflicts:** This creates a "de facto" hiring power for SCCs that contradicts existing labor agreements.

**4. The Necessity of Regional Scale and Expertise:** Hawaii's single statewide school district is unique and massive. In the continental U.S., districts are significantly smaller and more localized. It is functionally impossible for a single Superintendent to effectively manage all schools without the localized expertise of CASs who understand the unique needs of their complex areas. Eliminating the CAS is not a streamlining of bureaucracy; it is a disregard for the sheer scale of our educational system.

**5. Risk of "Honolulu-Centric" Governance:** Removing regional leadership threatens to centralize power entirely in Honolulu. For rural complexes like Nanakuli-Waianae and for our colleagues on the Neighbor Islands, a centralized structure ignores our unique geographic, cultural, and socio-economic challenges. This bill risks creating a hyper-centralized system that lacks accountability to the specific communities it is meant to serve.

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## Conclusion

For these reasons—the lack of structural clarity, the potential for overwhelming school-level staff, and the erosion of expert-led regional leadership—we urge the Committee to **hold SB 3334**. We must maintain a regional leadership structure that ensures our schools, teachers, and students receive the specialized support they require.

### Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

*Michelle Barber*

[Michelle Barber \(Feb 12, 2026 12:55:07 HST\)](#)

Michelle Barber - Principal

*Cassandra Lambert*

[Cassandra Lambert \(Feb 12, 2026 12:50:53 HST\)](#)

Cassandra Lambert - Vice Principal

*Summer Pila*

Summer Pila - Vice Principal Intern

*Tonya Duncan*

[Tonya Duncan \(Feb 12, 2026 12:41:10 HST\)](#)

Tonya Duncan - Vice Principal

*Sarah Uehara*

[Sarah Uehara \(Feb 12, 2026 12:50:15 HST\)](#)

Sarah Uehara - Vice Principal

Waikoloa Elementary and Middle School Administration Team

# SB 3334 Adminstrations Testimony - Oppose AB v2026-02-06 (1)

Final Audit Report

2026-02-12

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2026-02-12 - 12:55:07 PM HST





**STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO  
HILO-WAIĀKEA COMPLEX  
75 AUPUNI STREET, RM. 203  
HILO, HAWAII 96720**

**Date:** Friday February 13, 2026

**Time:** 1:05pm

**Location:** Conference Room CR 229 &  
Videoconference

**Committee:** EDU

**Department:** Hilo-Waiākea Complex Area Principals

**BILL:** SB 3334, Relating to Education Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**TESTIFIER(S):** Hilo-Waiākea Complex Area Principals

**POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

We are writing to express our opposition to SB 3334. While we understand the intent to reduce "administrative burdens," this bill fails to recognize the essential regional leadership that Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) provide, particularly for rural and underserved communities.

The erosion of the tri-level leadership framework, consisting of the state Department of Education, the complex area, and individual schools, threatens the very foundation of the reforms established by the **Reinventing Education Act of 2004 (Act 51)**. This structure was designed to ensure that meaningful authority exists as close to the schools as possible, and any move toward re-centralization or bypassing these levels undermines the academic achievement, safety, and well-being of Hawaii's students. Furthermore, returning to a larger District model would spread leadership too thin, making it impossible for superintendents to provide immediate hands-on guidance.

The following points highlight why maintaining this three-tiered leadership framework is essential for the success of public education:

**1. Preservation of School-Level Support**

The Act was specifically designed to move away from a system where principals faced the "nearly impossible task" of managing every detail without institutional support or financial discretion. By stripping localized support in the form of the CAS position, this bill risks drowning unique student needs in a wave of hampering bureaucracy and top-down oversight.

## 2. The Vital Intermediate Role of Complex Areas

The complex area system was created as a deliberate decentralized structure to replace the old district system. Complex area superintendents serve a critical function that cannot be effectively managed from a state-wide level:

- **Support and Accountability:** They are responsible for assisting principals and School Community Councils (SCCs) in obtaining necessary services and ensuring the success of school academic and financial plans.
- **Oversight:** They provide a layer of accountability by reviewing school plans to ensure they align with statewide policies and the best interests of the students.
- **Continuum of Learning:** The complex area structure facilitates the adoption of logical, sequential curricula that follow students as they move through the continuum of grades.

## 3. Efficiency and Reduced Bureaucracy

A key purpose of the tri-level framework is to reduce the bureaucracy that historically slowed down the Department of Education. The Act identifies that educational responsibilities spread across too many state agencies can create "roadblocks to progress". By consolidating functions, such as human resources, capital improvement, and fiscal management, within a clear, tiered educational structure, the system becomes more transparent and responsive. Eliminating or weakening any level of this framework would likely re-introduce these systemic impediments, making it harder for schools to function.

## 4. Collaborative Accountability

The tri-level framework is the engine of the educational accountability system. This system requires that:

- State-level leadership (the Board and Superintendent) sets broad policy and provides resources.
- Complex area superintendents are evaluated on their ability to support schools.
- Principals and school level administrators are held accountable for performance at the ground level.

Weakening this framework erodes the "lines of responsibility and mutual obligation" that ensure every level of the system, from the top to the bottom, is working toward the same goals of academic excellence and civic responsibility.

Additionally, we oppose the improper expansion of School Community Council (SCC) authority, as the bill proposes giving SCC evaluations a 50% weight in principal selection and evaluation.

We oppose this shift for the following reasons:

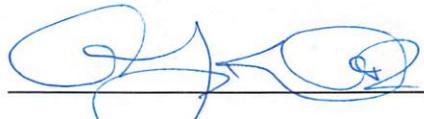
- Collective Bargaining Conflicts: This creates a "de facto" hiring power for SCCs that contradicts existing labor agreements.
- Integrity of Evaluation: This shift bypasses the professional, merit-based evaluation currently facilitated by the Complex Area Superintendents. We are concerned that, without regional oversight, the selection process could be easily disrupted by a small number of disgruntled individuals rather than focused on professional competence.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to reject SB 3334 and preserve the integrity of the current system that effectively serves Hawai'i's students, schools, and communities.

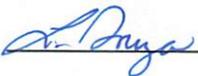
Respectfully,



Kelcy Koga, Waiakea High



Adrian De Mello, Hilo High



Lisa Souza, Waiakea Intermediate



Travis Toriano, Hilo Intermediate



Vincent Venzon, Keaukaha Elementary



Kimberly Castillo, Kapiolani Elementary



Jennifer Sueoka, Ha'aheo Elementary



Dawn Palmerson, Kaumana Elementary



Tyson Tomono, Hilo Union Elementary



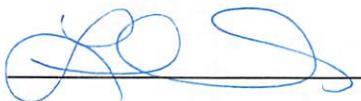
Ken Watanabe, Waiakea Elementary



David Dinkel, Kalaniana'ole Elementary



Suzanne Ochi, Waiakeawaena Elementary



Lindsay Miyashiro, E.B. de Silva Elementary

**Date:** Friday February 13, 2026  
**Time:** 1:05pm  
**Location:** Conference Room CR 229 &  
Videoconference  
**Committee:** EDN

**Department:**

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education:** Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**TESTIFIER(S): DES(s) for the Hilo/Waiakea Complex**

Polly Quigley  
Trini Hironaga  
Jasmine Okada  
Robin Valencia  
Dr. Angie Graham  
Dr. Tierney Barcarse

**POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

We are writing to express our opposition to SB 3334. As the District Educational Specialists overseeing special programs such as Special Education, School-Based Behavioral Health, English Learner, Induction/Mentoring, Foster/Homeless Concerns, Counseling Supports, Alternative Learning, and the Intensive Program Supports in the Hilo-Waiakea District, we are deeply concerned that the elimination of the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) will dismantle the vital support systems for our most vulnerable students.

While the bill's stated intent is to "reduce administrative burdens," it fails to account for the specialized regional leadership that ensures the delivery of a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students with disabilities and other services for special populations in our complex area.

**1. Breakdown of Essential Support Teams**

The CAS does not operate in isolation; they lead a Complex Area Support Team that works directly with schools in support of critical areas such as school improvement,

instruction, curriculum, professional development, induction and mentoring, CTE, special education, and a myriad of other areas. Eliminating the CAS position deprives these teams of leadership, leaving schools without cohesive support.

## **2. Risk to IDEA Compliance and Student Advocacy**

For students with disabilities and their families, the District Educational Specialists work in direct alignment with the CAS to manage:

- **IDEA Compliance:** Ensuring federal mandates are met at the school level.
- **Educational Programming & Funding:** Securing and allocating resources for specialized needs.
- **Written Complaints and Due Process Complaints:** Resolving legal and procedural conflicts locally and efficiently.

Without a CAS to provide regional oversight, the fidelity of FAPE implementation is at significant risk. The "middle-management link" provided by the CAS ensures that state-level initiatives are translated into effective classroom support.

## **3. Expansion of "Honolulu-Centric" Governance**

Removing complex area leadership threatens to centralize power entirely in Honolulu. In complex areas like Hilo-Waiakea, a centralized structure fails to address our unique geographic and socio-economic challenges. We risk creating a system that lacks accountability, connection, and cultural responsiveness as it relates to all the specific communities and families we serve.

The loss of the CAS would result in a massive void of support for schools, students, and their families. We urge the Committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain the complex-area leadership structure essential to student success.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

**Respectfully,**

Polly Quigley  
Trini Hironaga  
Jasmine Okada  
Robin Valencia  
Dr. Angie Graham  
Dr. Tierney Barcarse

# Written Testimony re: SB3334

## Official Stance: Strong OPPOSITION

As principal of Leihōkū Elementary in the Nanakuli-Waianae Complex Area, I stand in vehement opposition to SB3334. While I understand the desire for administrative efficiency, this bill, as currently drafted, threatens the stability of our schools, the clarity of our leadership tri-level (School, Complex, State), and the equity of representation for rural and non-Honolulu centric communities.

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## Key Concerns and Commentary

### 1. Erosion of the Tri-Level Leadership Framework

The Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) is not merely an administrative layer; it is the essential conduit connecting individual school needs with state-level initiatives. Eliminating this position severs the vital communication link between the schoolhouse and the Queen Lili'uokalani Building. Without a CAS, our schools risk becoming islands of operation without a cohesive regional strategy or a direct line of advocacy at the state level.

### 2. Contradictory and Vague Language

We find the language of SB3334 inherently contradictory. The bill acknowledges that CASs are a "vital support system," yet simultaneously seeks their elimination. Furthermore, the proposal to "utilize its administrative framework" as a replacement is dangerously vague.

- **Lack of Vision:** There is no provided visual or organizational chart detailing what replaces the CAS.
- **Historical Precedent:** If the intent is to return to the "Deputy Superintendent" model, we must note that this model failed in the past. Expecting two deputies to manage 42+ schools in the Leeward District is a logistical impossibility that will lead to burnout and systemic neglect.

### 3. Concerns Regarding School Community Council (SCC) Authority

Section 11 of the bill suggests granting SCCs a 50% weight in the selection of principals, with final authority resting with the Superintendent. I strongly oppose this for the following reasons:

- **Conflict of Interest/Policy:** Current statutes dictate that SCCs do not have the authority to hire or fire principals. Giving a 50% weight creates a "de facto" hiring power that contradicts existing labor agreements and Department policies.
- **Integrity of Evaluation:** Shifting final authority to the Superintendent and SCCs bypasses the professional, merit-based evaluation currently facilitated by the CAS, who understands the specific nuances of our community.

### 4. Risk of "Honolulu-Centric" Governance and Lack of Focus on Student Support

Removing regional leadership threatens to centralize power in Honolulu. For rural complexes like Nanakuli-Waianae and for our colleagues on the Neighbor Islands, a centralized structure ignores our unique geographic, cultural, and socio-economic challenges. Furthermore, **student** needs are not uniform across the state. Removing leadership by complex areas fails to address the fact that our **students** need representation in all complex areas. Without a CAS to advocate for these specific needs, our voices will be lost in a centralized system that doesn't understand our local context.

This bill risks creating "CAS-like" positions that lack accountability to the specific communities they serve.

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## **Conclusion**

I cannot support a measure that dissolves a proven leadership structure without presenting a clear, researched, and concise plan of action. Any changes to the Department's administrative framework must be made in consultation with our union and through a transparent process that prioritizes student outcomes over bureaucratic restructuring.

**Until such a plan is presented, I respectfully urge the committee to hold this bill.**

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 12:59:26 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Angela Hoppe Cruz	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing in opposition of SB3334 and am writing as a general community member of the Nanakuli Waianae Coast. I am a long standing community member and privileged to raise my 3 children, beneficiaries of the public school system.

SB3334 would be a disruption to the delivery of a system of support to the 9 schools in this district. Repeal of Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) would sever a connection of support between schools and community. As a parent, I am grateful for the countless resources the complex area delivers to schools. The complex area teams led by the CAS are intimately connected and understand the local culture of each of our schools' communities enabling them to better serve. An example of support was a recent loss of a student. With the added layer of complex area team support, my daughter and her impacted friends received amazing support from administration, counselors and external community supports.

Regarding Principal Evaluations: I believe evaluations require a concerted effort. SCC's can contribute and with CAS submit the evaluation directly to the Superintendent.

Regarding Administrative Streamlining: The stated intent of the bill is to reduce "unnecessary administrative burdens" and I believe would do the exact opposite, doing more harm than good by eliminating a critical layer of support, especially to the most vulnerable student communities such as the Nanakuli Waianae Complex Area.

Mahalo for your consideration and stopping SB3334.

Humbly,

Angela Hoppe-Cruz

**DATE:** February 13, 2026

**TIME:** 1:05 PM

**LOCATION:** Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

**COMMITTEE:** Committee on Education (EDN)

**TO:** Chair Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee

**FROM:** Erika Blanco, Principal Honokaa High and Intermediate

**RE:** SB 3334, Relating to Education – OPPOSITION



Good afternoon. My name is Erika Blanco and I am the Principal of Honokaa High and Intermediate. I am writing to you today not just as an administrator, but as someone who is on the ground every day, responsible for the safety, learning, and future of our students. I strongly oppose SB 3334.

From where I sit, this bill doesn't just "cut a position", it cuts the lifeline that keeps our schools stable. I urge you to consider these three real impacts:

1. High schools are not simple organizations. On any given day, I am simultaneously managing special education compliance, campus safety, athletic schedules, career and college, CTSOs and a multi-million dollar budget. The Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) is the only person in the system who truly understands my school's "feeder pattern" and our community's unique context. Removing that layer doesn't make us faster, it makes us isolated especially in Honokaa. It leaves me without the instructional and operational partner I need to keep our doors open and our students succeeding.
2. For our schools on Hawaii Island, this bill is a step backward for equity. We don't have the same immediate access to central office resources that O'ahu schools do. Our CAS provides the "boots-on-the-ground" leadership that understands our specific geographic and staffing struggles. If you eliminate this role, you are effectively widening the gap between O'ahu and our outer island communities. You are taking away the leader who knows our families best.
3. We already have hard-won, negotiated systems for our educational leaders such as CESSA. These provide a fair, merit based way to select and evaluate leaders. By putting these processes into statute and shifting the weights so drastically, we risk turning a professional selection process into a political one. We need systems that provide clarity and stability especially for our rural areas, not ones that can be disrupted by a few loud voices at the expense of professional competence.

We are constantly told to "work toward progress," but dismantling the core of Act 51 is a reversal of that progress. It creates uncertainty exactly where we need strength. As a principal who lives and breathes the success of my school community, I respectfully ask you to strongly oppose SB 3334.

Mahalo for your time and for the opportunity to share my perspective.

**LATE**

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 1:07:13 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kendrick Kakazu	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I apologize. Not all principals were able to sign, however, we were all in agreement with these statements.

**LATE**

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 1:25:07 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Bryce Kaneshiro	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to **SB 3334** in its entirety. This measure is fundamentally regressive and fails to recognize the expertise and dedication of our current Complex Area Superintendents.

In 2001, the Department of Education transitioned to the "Complex Area" model specifically to decentralize authority and move administrative support closer to the schools. This model allows principals to receive more immediate, tailored assistance than the former district model could provide. Reverting to a district-wide structure would effectively set our educational system back 25 years, reviving a centralized system that is long outdated.

Furthermore, this bill appears to have been drafted without a practical understanding of educational operations. It prioritizes outside opinions over the lived experience of those who manage the complexities of our schools every day. I urge the committee to defer this measure and maintain the current structure that best serves our principals and students.

Bryce Kaneshiro

Department of Education / Extracurricular Administrator

**LATE**

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 4:04:26 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
david hunter	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express my **strong opposition to SB3334**, which proposes to eliminate the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) positions within the Hawaii Department of Education.

While the goal of administrative efficiency is always worth pursuing, the elimination of the CAS layer would be a structural failure for several reasons:

- **Geographic and Logistical Reality:** Hawaii is the only statewide school district in the nation. It is physically impossible for a single State Superintendent to provide meaningful oversight and support to schools spanning six islands. The CAS provides the localized leadership necessary to address the unique needs of rural, neighbor-island, and urban complexes alike.
- **A Crucial Buffer for Principals:** Without a CAS, school principals would lose their primary point of contact for crisis management, resource allocation, and mentorship. This would lead to a "bottleneck" at the state level, delaying critical decisions that affect student safety and learning.
- **Loss of Accountability:** The CAS ensures that state-level mandates are actually implemented in the classroom. By removing this middle layer, the Department loses its "eyes and ears" on the ground, making it harder to hold schools accountable for performance and fiscal responsibility.

Effective education requires a balance of centralized vision and decentralized execution. SB3334 ignores the necessity of the latter. I urge the committee to **defer this measure** and instead look for ways to empower our Complex Area Superintendents to better serve our teachers and students.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

David Hunter



**LATE**

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony regarding Senate Bill(SB)3334, which proposes the elimination of the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) position within the Hawai'i State Department of Education (HIDOE). My name is Kimberly Souza, I am currently serving as a Vice Principal intern at Kaimukī High School, within the Kaimukī-McKinley-Roosevelt (KMR) Complex Area. I respectfully oppose SB3334.

While SB3334 intends to improve efficiency and accountability, eliminating the CAS position would significantly disrupt the system established under Act 51, weakening the leadership structures and support which directly impact schools and ultimately student success.

From my experience as a HIDOE teacher and now a school administrator, the CAS plays a critical role in balancing leadership development and school level support. The CAS provides frequent, actionable feedback to principals while also coaching them through complex situations involving personnel, investigations, compliance issues, and school improvement efforts. This guidance ensures school leaders are supported in making sound, ethical, and student-centered decisions.

The CAS also plays a critical role in talent management. Careful consideration is given when looking at the needs of the schools and the skills of the principals, the CAS is strategic and intentional in placing leaders in environments where they can best serve their communities. Removing this layer of leadership risks reducing the depth of understanding and relationship-building decision-making that supports effective school leadership.

In conclusion, eliminating the CAS position will not resolve the “unnecessary administrative burdens and unclear authority structures” identified in SB3334; rather, it risks intensifying them. The responsibilities of the CAS position will still exist, but will need to be absorbed by the principals. This added strain will likely overwhelm principals, taking their attention from instructional leadership and student-centered priorities. Preserving the CAS position is essential to providing schools with guidance, oversight, and support necessary to promote effective decision-making and positive student outcomes.

It is easy to observe from the outside what seems to be a viable solution, but meaningful and lasting improvement requires a deep understanding of the complex systems, relationships, and day-to-day realities within schools that cannot be fully captured without experiencing it firsthand.

Putting all ideas on the table and engaging in collaborative discussion would be a more effective approach to identifying solutions that strengthen the systems that affect our collective priority-the future of our keiki.

**LATE**

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 5:34:29 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nathan Davis	Testifying for Hawaii Department of Education	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**I am writing to formally express my opposition to SB 3334. Having served as a teacher within the Department of Education for 20 years, I have seen firsthand how vital administrative support is to educator retention and success. Throughout my teaching career, the mentorship I received from my administrators was the catalyst for my professional growth and, ultimately, my ability to positively impact hundreds of students.**

**Now, as I transition into my role as a Vice Principal, that cycle of support continues. The guidance and knowledge I receive from my Complex Area Superintendent is instrumental in my development. This leadership structure allows me to effectively mentor my own staff, ensuring that our teachers have the support they need to provide high-quality outcomes for their students.**

**Sincerely,**

**Nathan Davis**

**Vice Principal**

**Princess Ruth Ke'elikolani Middle School**

**LATE**

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 9:58:34 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

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

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, OPPOSE

3334 SB RELATING TO EDUCATION.

**LATE**

**Date:** Friday February 13, 2026

**Time:** 1:05pm

**Location:** Conference Room CR 229 &  
Videoconference

**Committee:** EDN

**Department:** Leeward District, Department of Education

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education:** Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**TESTIFIER):** C. Puanani Wilhelm, Nanakuli/Waianae Complex Educational Specialist

**POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

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

I am testifying in opposition of SB 3334. I have had the unique opportunity of working at every level of the Department of Education. I started my career in the DOE as the first Hawaiian Language Immersion teacher in 1987 at Keaukaha Elementary School. I subsequently became the first State Level Educational Specialist for the Hawaiian Language Immersion Program and Hawaiian Studies. I have been a school administrator for 3 different Hawaiian culture based charter schools where I also sometimes served as a Student Services Coordinator, a Registrar and a teacher. I have served as a Complex Academic Officer for Title 1 and a Complex Educational Specialist in Nānākuli-Waiʻanae for the past 10 years.

Given my experiences, the elimination of Complex Area Superintendents proposed in SB3334 seems like a step backwards for a system that has struggled to equitably make decisions for the entire state of Hawaiʻi. School leadership in rural areas such as Nānākuli-Waiʻanae require an understanding of the place, its people and its unique history. I have worked in a school that is off-grid, with no running potable water where students live in the same off-grid conditions and have challenges that Honolulu students would never know. I cannot accept that schools in areas such as ours can receive equitable treatment in a Honolulu-centric system without the advocacy and support of Complex Area Superintendents.

In Nānākuli-Waiʻanae the CAS does not operate in isolation; they lead a Complex Area Support Team that works directly with schools in support of critical areas such as

school improvement, instruction, curriculum, professional development, induction and mentoring, CTE, special education, and a myriad of other areas. More importantly this kind of leadership ensures that support of schools is coordinated and that the support teams work collaboratively for maximum positive effect. Eliminating the CAS position deprives these teams of leadership, leaving schools without cohesive support.

I also do not believe that School Community Councils can fairly and objectively evaluate the performance of principals without training and assurances of confidentiality. It would be difficult for SCCs to gather information that would be used for a fair and evidence based evaluation when they do not have access to protected and specific student and staff data, incident reports and school related communications such as emails. The task of evaluating school leadership is another valuable endeavor of the CAS who can also provide immediate feedback and support for school leadership improvement.

Complex Area Superintendents also provide support for school leadership when there are issues with community, families, employees and students that could potentially affect the whole system, complex, school or community. Complex Area Superintendents that are members of the complex's community, such as the CAS in Nānākuli-Wai'anae, have a unique relationship with each of its components and have earned the trust and respect of its members. This kind of relationship with the community cannot be developed at the state level and is something that a single statewide system without complex level leadership can do.

We urge the Committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain the complex-area leadership structure essential to student success.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

**Respectfully,**

C. Puanani Wilhelm, Complex Educational Specialist  
Nānākuli-Wai'anae Complex Area

**Date:** Friday February 13, 2026

**Time:** 1:05 p.m.

**Location:** Conference Room CR 229 & Videoconference

**Committee:** EDN

**Department:** Waialua Complex Area Principals

**BILL: SB 3334, Relating to Education** Elimination of Complex Area Superintendent Positions

**TESTIFIER(S):** Waialua Complex Area Principals

**POSITION: OPPOSITION AND COMMENTS**

Chair Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

We are writing to express our opposition to SB 3334. While we understand the stated intent of reducing “administrative burdens,” this bill fails to recognize the essential regional leadership that Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) provide—particularly for rural communities like ours.

Our opposition is based on the following critical concerns:

**1. Erosion of the Tri-Level Leadership Framework**

The CAS is not merely an administrative layer; it serves as the vital conduit connecting individual school needs with state-level initiatives. Eliminating this position severs the communication link between each individual school site and the DOE's central leadership. Without a CAS, schools risk becoming isolated operations, lacking cohesive regional strategy and consistent advocacy at all levels.

**2. Lack of Clarity Regarding Reassignment of CAS Responsibilities**

Section 17 of the bill does not clearly explain how CAS duties would be reassigned. If the intent is to revert to a district superintendent model, this would significantly increase the number of schools overseen by fewer individuals. Such consolidation would likely result in diminished support, systemic oversight gaps, and leadership burnout. This would directly impact our ability to be effective school leaders and ensure the best possible support for both our students and teachers.

**3. Improper Expansion of School Community Council (SCC) Authority**

The bill proposes assigning 50% weight to SCC evaluations in principal selection. We strongly oppose this shift for the following reasons:

- **Conflict with Existing Labor Agreements:** Granting SCCs this level of influence effectively creates a de facto hiring authority that may conflict with established union contracts and negotiated processes.
- **Compromised Integrity of the Evaluation Process:** Principal selection is currently guided by professional, merit-based evaluation facilitated by the CAS. Removing regional oversight increases the risk that the process could be influenced by a small number of dissatisfied individuals rather than grounded in objective professional standards.

#### 4. Risk of Over-Centralized Governance

Eliminating regional leadership would centralize authority in Honolulu. For rural complexes such as ours, as well as the Leeward coast and for our colleagues on the Neighbor Islands, a fully centralized structure does not adequately account for unique geographic, cultural, and socio-economic realities. This bill risks creating a hyper-centralized system that lacks responsiveness and accountability to the communities it is meant to serve.

We need only look at the frustration to schools caused by the DOE’s state facilities department to see the dangers of over-centralization. Schools currently struggle with a massive backlog of repairs, inefficient procurement, and a lack of responsiveness from a central office that is disconnected from the daily physical realities of our campuses. Removing the CAS—the one advocate who understands our local infrastructure needs—would only exacerbate these problems. This bill risks creating a hyper-centralized system that lacks the responsiveness and accountability required to maintain our schools and serve our communities.

#### 5. Volatility and Lack of Technical Expertise Within SCC Structure

The provision granting SCCs 50% weight in principal hiring and evaluation is structurally unsustainable. High military transience and parents working outside the complex contribute to frequent turnover in SCC membership, resulting in limited institutional knowledge. Additionally, principal evaluation is a technical executive function requiring specialized expertise in pedagogy, school leadership, and labor relations. Shifting half of this responsibility to a rotating volunteer body undermines professional, merit-based standards.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to hold SB 3334 and maintain the regional leadership structure that ensures schools, educators, and students receive the focused support they require.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

Waiialua Complex Area Principals

*Christine Alexander*

Christine Alexander (Feb 12, 2026 13:29:53 HST)

Christine Alexander

Waiialua High and Intermediate

*Malaea Wetzel*

Malaea Wetzel (Feb 12, 2026 13:02:49 HST)

Malaea Wetzel

Haleiwa Elementary Principal

*Varissa Pata*

Varissa Pata (Feb 12, 2026 12:55:20 HST)

Varissa Pata

Waiialua Elementary Principal

**LATE**

**SB-3334**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 8:25:06 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/13/2026 1:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Angel Ramos	Testifying for Hawai'i School for the Deaf and the Blind	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Dr. Angel Ramos, Principal of the Hawai'i School for the Deaf and the Blind. Eliminating the position of Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) within the Hawaii DOE will overwhelm the position of Superintendent. As an administrator for over 20 years on the mainland and 10 years in Hawai'i, I can confirm many problems in the DOE system need to be fixed - eliminating the position of CAS is not one of them.

If you want to make things worse and make it even harder to hire a Superintendent in the future, then eliminate the CAS position. No one in their right mind will apply to be Superintendent.

If you want to make life more difficult for Principals, then eliminate the CAS position. As a principal, I just do not see how the Superintendent will be able to respond to the needs of the 100+ principals in Hawai'i and still complete the Superintendent's responsibilities. It's not going to happen. So, if you want to destroy the Hawai'i DOE, then eliminate the CAS position. If you want to keep Hawai'i DOE alive and functioning, keep the CAS position. It's that simple.