

Sierra Jansons

From: Kalakau-Baarde, Piikea <Piikea.Kalakau-Baarde@teachforamerica.org>
Sent: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 12:37 PM
To: EDU Committee
Subject: Testimony in Support of SB895

You don't often get email from piikea.kalakau-baarde@teachforamerica.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

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

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

I'm reaching out in support of SB895, which establishes new requirements for teacher-led kindergarten assessments in public and charter schools.

A significant portion of my current role involves advancing a 10-year goal around early literacy that we established through research and over 400 local interviews and survey responses from educational leaders, community organizations, students, and families. Specifically, our goal is that by 2030, twice as many children in Nānākuli and Wai'anāe will reach proficiency in 3rd-grade reading, indicating that they are on a path to economic mobility. We believe that revisiting Hawai'i's Kindergarten assessments would positively impact this goal.

Kindergarten educators use daily observation and direct interaction to continually monitor student progress. As trained experts, they are uniquely qualified to assess a child's development after an initial period of adjustment. Mandating standardized, external assessments during the first weeks of the year creates an undue administrative load, detracts from vital learning time, and adds unnecessary pressure to both the classroom and the staff.

This measure restores legislative intent by:

- Ensuring assessments are teacher-led and developmentally appropriate;
- Allowing sufficient time for meaningful observations for formative assessments;
- Requiring follow-up assessment later in the school year to measure growth; and
- Explicitly prohibiting the mandatory use of costly, externally contracted assessment tools and excessive training requirements.

This bill supports children, respects teacher professionalism, and represents responsible stewardship of public funds. I respectfully urge your support.

Mahalo,

Pi'ikea Kalakau-Baarde, EdD
TFA Hawai'i

Sierra Jansons

From: Brown, Grace <Grace.Brown@teachforamerica.org>
Sent: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 1:06 PM
To: EDU Committee
Subject: Testimony in Support of SB 895

You don't often get email from grace.brown@teachforamerica.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Aloha Senators,

I support this measure as it restores legislative intent, respects teacher professionalism, and represents responsible stewardship of public funds.

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

Sierra Jansons

From: Weber-Yarbrough, Anne <Anne.Weber-Yarbrough@teachforamerica.org>
Sent: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 1:01 PM
To: EDU Committee
Subject: Testimony in Support of SB 895

You don't often get email from anne.weber-yarbrough@teachforamerica.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I support this measure as it restores legislative intent, respects teacher professionalism, and represents responsible stewardship of public funds.



Anne Weber-Yarbrough (she/her)
Managing Director Regional Initiatives
500 Ala Moana Blvd., Suite 3-580
808.492.2150 (mobile)

[Subscribe to our newsletter](#)
[Schedule a meeting with me using this link.](#)

Hawaii State Legislature

Testimony in Support of SB 895

Relating to Education

Description:

Establishes new requirements for teacher-led kindergarten assessments in public and charter Schools. Authorizes the Board of Education to adopt rules. Repeals certain requirements for the Department of Education and State Public Charter School Commission to share data with the Department of Human Services. (Proposed SD1)

Jennifer Nakamoto, Parent

I submit testimony in strong support of this measure.

As a parent, I believe that teachers are able to assess student's abilities through their daily interactions and observations with students. Teachers are trained professionals who are able to evaluate a child's growth once a child has been able to adjust to being in a school environment. Formal, extensive testing, within the first weeks of school can cause stress for the child.

This bill supports children, respects teacher professionalism, and represents responsible stewardship of public funds. I respectfully urge your support.

Sierra Jansons

From: Auerbach, Erin <Erin.Auerbach@teachforamerica.org>
Sent: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 1:52 PM
To: EDU Committee
Subject: Testimony in Support of SB 895.

LATE

You don't often get email from erin.auerbach@teachforamerica.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Aloha!

I support this measure as it restores legislative intent, respects teacher professionalism, and represents responsible stewardship of public funds.

Me ka mahalo nui,

Erin



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

Teach For America Hawai'i
500 Ala Moana Blvd., Suite 3-580
808.521.1371 x 27110

[Subscribe to our newsletter](#)
[Schedule a meeting with me using this link.](#)

From: Kiyō 808 <tanakasan9393@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 2:09 PM
To: EDU Committee
Subject: Testimony SB 895



You don't often get email from tanakasan9393@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good afternoon,

This is my testimony for SB895:

Hawaii State Legislature

Testimony in Support of SB 895

Relating to Education

Description:

Establishes new requirements for teacher-led kindergarten assessments in public and charter Schools. Authorizes the Board of Education to adopt rules. Repeals certain requirements for the Department of Education and State Public Charter School Commission to share data with the Department of Human Services. (Proposed SD1)

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

I submit testimony in strong support of this measure.

The original intent behind Hawaii's kindergarten assessments was simple; to help teachers understand where children are developmentally so they can better support learning in the classroom. This formative type of assessment would provide common information on the percentage of students entering school Kindergarten Ready as well as what the areas are that need academic and social intervention for the others. A post test in the fourth quarter of the school year will also be able to determine how many students have been able to meet Kindergarten expectations.

Unfortunately, this intent has been stretched to justify a formal commercially developed assessment system contracted to a mainland vendor at a cost approaching one million dollars, coupled with extensive and time-consuming teacher training requirements.

This approach was never what the Legislature envisioned.

Kindergarten teachers already assess students daily through observation, interaction and instruction. They are trained professionals who are best positioned to evaluate a child's development once the child has had time to adjust to the school environment. Requiring a formal, externally developed assessment within the first weeks of schools imposes unnecessary

administrative burden, diverts instructional time, and places additional stress on both students and teachers.

This measure restores legislative intent by:

Ensuring assessments are teacher-led and developmentally appropriate;

Allowing sufficient time for meaningful observations for formative assessments;

Requiring follow-up assessment later in the school year to measure growth; and

Explicitly prohibiting the mandatory use of costly, externally contracted assessment tools and excessive training requirements.

This bill supports children, respects teacher professionalism, and represents responsible stewardship of public funds. I respectfully urge your support.

Thank you,

Hailey Tanaka

Hawaii State Legislature
Testimony in Support of SB 895
Relating to Education

LATE

Description:

Establishes new requirements for teacher-led kindergarten assessments in public and charter Schools. Authorizes the Board of Education to adopt rules. Repeals certain requirements for the Department of Education and State Public Charter School Commission to share data with the Department of Human Services. (Proposed SD1)

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

I submit testimony in strong support of this measure.

The original intent behind Hawaii's kindergarten assessments was simple; to help teachers understand where children are developmentally so they can better support learning in the classroom. This formative type of assessment would provide common information on the percentage of students entering school Kindergarten Ready as well as what the areas are that need academic and social intervention for the others. A post test in the fourth quarter of the school year will also be able to determine how many students have been able to meet Kindergarten expectations.

Unfortunately, this intent has been stretched to justify a formal commercially developed assessment system contracted to a mainland vendor at a cost approaching one million dollars, coupled with extensive and time-consuming teacher training requirements.

This approach was never what the Legislature envisioned.

Kindergarten teachers already assess students daily through observation, interaction and instruction. They are trained professionals who are best positioned to evaluate a child's development once the child has had time to adjust to the school environment. Requiring a formal, externally developed assessment within the first weeks of schools imposes unnecessary administrative burden, diverts instructional dime, and places additional stress on both students and teachers.

This measure restores legislative intent by:

- Ensuring assessments are teacher-led and developmentally appropriate;
- Allowing sufficient time for meaningful observations for formative assessments;
- Requiring follow-up assessment later in the school year to measure growth; and
- Explicitly prohibiting the mandatory use of costly, externally contracted assessment tools and excessive training requirements.

This bill supports children, respects teacher professionalism, and represents responsible stewardship of public funds. I respectfully urge your support.

LATE



1200 Ala Kapuna Street • Honolulu, Hawai'i 96819
Tel: (808) 833-2711 • Fax: (808) 839-7106 • Web: www.hsta.org

Osa Tui, Jr.
President

Logan Okita
Vice President

Cheney Kaku
Secretary-Treasurer

Andrea Eshelman
Executive Director

TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Item: **SB 895 - Kindergarten Testing**

Position: **Supports**

Hearing: **2-11-26 1:29PM; Conference Room 229**

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

Dear Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association **supports SB 895** that establishes new requirements for teacher-led kindergarten assessments in public and charter schools, authorizes the Board of Education to adopt rules, and repeals certain requirements for the Department of Education and State Public Charter School Commission to share data with the Department of Human Services.

We trust our teacher members to assess and document the growth of our keiki. This measure restores legislative intent by:

- Ensuring assessments are teacher-led and developmentally appropriate;
- Allowing sufficient time for meaningful observations for formative assessments;
- Requiring follow-up assessment later in the school year to measure growth; and
- Explicitly prohibiting the mandatory use of costly, externally contracted assessment tools and excessive training requirements.

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association asks your committee to support SB 895.

Mahalo.

Sierra Jansons

From: Akaka Manfre, Meilan <Meilan.AkakaManfre@teachforamerica.org>
Sent: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 4:33 PM
To: EDU Committee
Subject: Testimony in Support of SB895
Categories: Yellow category



You don't often get email from meilan.akakamanfre@teachforamerica.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

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

My name is Meilan Akaka Manfre, and I serve as the executive director of Teach for America Hawai'i. I'm a former public school teacher and public school parent. Mahalo again for the work you do.

I'm reaching out **in support** of **SB895**, which establishes new requirements for teacher-led kindergarten assessments in public and charter schools.

The original intent behind Hawai'i's kindergarten assessments was simple: to help teachers understand where children are developmentally so they can better support learning in the classroom. This formative type of assessment would provide common information on the percentage of students entering school ready for kindergarten, as well as areas of opportunity for academic and social intervention. A post-test in the fourth quarter of the school year will also be used to determine how many students have been able to meet Kindergarten expectations.

As I have seen in my own child's classroom, kindergarten teachers provide the best assessment through daily classroom interaction. Imposing external tests in the opening weeks of school diverts time from teaching and creates needless stress for students and staff alike. Let's prioritize instruction over administrative burden.

This measure restores legislative intent by:

- Ensuring assessments are teacher-led and developmentally appropriate;
- Allowing sufficient time for meaningful observations for formative assessments;
- Requiring follow-up assessment later in the school year to measure growth; and
- Explicitly prohibiting the mandatory use of costly, externally contracted assessment tools and excessive training requirements.

This bill supports children, respects teacher professionalism, and represents responsible stewardship of public funds. I respectfully urge your support.

Mahalo,
Meilan Akaka Manfre



Meilan Akaka Manfre (she/her/hers)

Executive Director, [Teach For America Hawaii](#)

meilan.akakamanfre@teachforamerica.org

500 Ala Moana Blvd., Ste. 3-580, Honolulu, HI 96813

[808-521-1371](tel:8085211371) x27101 (o); [808-398-3227](tel:8083983227) (c)

[Subscribe to our newsletter](#)

One day, all children will have the opportunity to attain an equitable and excellent education.

