



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

Date: 04/16/2026

Time: 02:05 PM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: EDN

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SCR162, REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO CONVENE A SHARED DECISION MAKING COMMITTEE TO DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN TO ESTABLISH A K-12 KAIAPUNI SCHOOL IN KAPOLEI.

Purpose of Bill: Requesting The Department Of Education To Convene A Shared Decision Making Committee To Develop An Action Plan To Establish A K-12 Kaiapuni School In Kapolei.

Department's Position:

E ko ka 'Aha 'Ōlelo o ka Moku'āina o Hawai'i nei, aloha 'oukou:

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) respectfully offers comments on SCR 162, SD1 / SR 153, SD1 and recommends changes to the language of the resolution.

The Department is committed to strengthening Kaiapuni education (Hawaiian Language Immersion). Kaiapuni education has grown significantly over the last ten years and continues to grow. Currently, there are 26 Department schools with Kaiapuni programs and 2,602 students enrolled in 2025-26. Next year, more schools will open Kaiapuni programs and more grade levels will be added in existing Kaiapuni programs.

The Department, together with stakeholders, is addressing the ever changing needs of Ka Papahana Kaiapuni through the Kaiapuni Strategic Implementation Plan (KSIP). The KSIP was developed by a committee of 25 stakeholders and included representatives from the Hawai'i Board of Education, Department state offices, complex areas, school-level administration, and community members ('Aha Kauleo, University of Hawai'i, HSTA, HGEA, and charter schools). The plan was approved by the Superintendent in January 2026 as a component of the Department's 2023-2029 Strategic Implementation Plan: Phase II. The KSIP addresses three (3) primary strategic goals for Ka Papahana Kaiapuni:

- Goal 1: Defined Success – Establish and advance a clear vision for Kaiapuni student success.
- Goal 2: Capacity Development – Nurture conditions that attract, retain, and elevate the value and enhance the quality of our personnel.
- Goal 3: System Transformation – Transform the system to support Kaiapuni education (Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, Mentoring, Professional Development, Teacher

Preparation).

In addition, the Department continues to provide updates and gather community input at each of the quarterly 'Aha Kauleo meetings as an obligation to include stakeholders in the planning process established in [BOE Policy 105-8](#). The 'Aha Kauleo is an advisory group comprised of Kaiapuni teachers, principals, parents and Hawaiian education advocates, including representatives from the University of Hawai'i Kaiapuni teacher preparation programs and Hawaiian language colleges, 'Aha Pūnana Leo, Kamehameha Schools and the Office of Hawaiian Education. The 'Aha Kauleo serves as the main avenue for the Kaiapuni community to advise the Department on issues related to Kaiapuni education and the Department continues to partner with the 'Aha Kauleo to make informed decisions to address the immediate and long-term needs of Ka Papahana Kaiapuni.

At this time, the Department is focusing on Goal 2 of the KSIP: Capacity Development, addressing the severe lack of qualified teachers who are proficient in 'ōlelo Hawai'i as an essential means to standing up new schools is the main priority. In the last 10 years, Kaiapuni student enrollment has increased by 67% and the current practice to meet this demand has left many teaching lines filled with unlicensed, emergency permitted or substitute teachers. There are currently 189 Kaiapuni teachers in classrooms across the State and 27% of those teachers are currently unlicensed.

The strategic planning process to achieve the KSIP goals is an effort of the Department to ensure that necessary system support is available so Kaiapuni students statewide are provided high quality, rigorous learning opportunities in 'ōlelo Hawai'i and to build capacity to grow quality Kaiapuni education, K-12 and accessible statewide. A copy of both plans can be provided upon request by email to Office of Hawaiian Education Institutional Analyst Kealohapau'ole Ahuna at Kealohapauole.Ahuna@k12.hi.us.

The Department recommends that page 2, line 27 to page 5 line 2 be replaced with the following language:

- Starting on page 2, line 27:
 - BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-third Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2026, the House of Representatives concurring, the 'Aha Kauleo will include a standing agenda item in its quarterly meetings to provide updates and collect input on the Kaiapuni Strategic Implementation Plan's goals and prioritized strategies.
 - BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department shall provide standing reports of its Kaiapuni Strategic Implementation Plan to stakeholders at the quarterly 'Aha Kauleo meetings.
 - BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Education will provide a summary report of the Kaiapuni Strategic Implementation Planning process, and the status of Kaiapuni education, including information about Kaiapuni education in Kapolei and other communities, to the legislature no later than 20 days before the opening of the 2027 legislative session.

The Department appreciates the intent of SCR 162, SD1 and SR 153, SD1 and is committed to addressing the needs of all our Kaiapuni throughout the State. Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments.



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

‘Ōlelo Hō‘ike ‘Aha Kau Kānāwai

TESTIMONY WITH COMMENTS ON

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 162 SD1

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO CONVENE A SHARED-
DECISION MAKING COMMITTEE TO DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN TO ESTABLISH A K-
12 KAIAPUNI SCHOOL IN KAPOLEI

Ke Kōmike Hale o ka Ho‘ona‘auao

(House Committee on Education)

Ke Kapitala ‘o Hawai‘i

(Hawai‘i State Capitol)

Apelila 16, 2026

2:05PM

Lumi 309

Aloha e Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and House Members of the Committee:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) provides **COMMENTS on SCR162 SD1** which calls for a shared decision-making, twelve-member committee that will develop an action plan to establish a new kindergarten through twelfth grade kula kaiapuni (Hawaiian immersion school)¹ in Kapolei, O‘ahu. This resolution will provide concrete next steps with the strategic convening of key stakeholders and decisionmakers to develop an action plan to meet the growing demand for kula kaiapuni in a centralized location where Native Hawaiian communities reside. **OHA appreciates the intent of the resolution, recognizes there is dire need for kumu kaiapuni (Hawaiian immersion teachers), and stands ready to continue working together with all key stakeholders towards solutions.**

Addressing the Critical Shortage of Kumu Kaiapuni is Essential to Meeting the Increasing Demand for Kula Kaiapuni.

Although our state is constitutionally mandated “to promote the study of Hawaiian culture, history, and language[,]” and ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i has been an official state language since 1978,² much remains to be done to ensure the re-normalization of the Hawaiian language in the Hawaiian Islands. Once spoken fluently throughout Hawai‘i by Native Hawaiians and foreigners alike, ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i was thought to be nearly extinct by the 1980s, when fewer than 50 fluent speakers under the age of 18 were left. A major

¹ “Kula Kaiapuni” is used here for consistency with the bill title to mean Hawaiian immersion school. The intent of using this terminology is not with regards to whether the kula kaiapuni is a stand-alone structure in the meaning of “school.” There are kula kaiapuni co-located on existing Department of Education campuses.

² Haw. Const. Art. XV Sec. 4.

reason for the near extinction of the Hawaiian language was an 1896 law that effectively banned ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i from being taught and spoken in schools, forcing English-only instruction.³ This 1896 law and its predecessors were in effect for roughly 90 years, until efforts by ‘Aha Pūnana Leo and others in the mid 1980s were finally recognized and realized by the legislature to once again allow for ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i medium instruction in our local schools. **There has been great progress in developing more ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i speakers, but there remains to be concern as the remaining manaleo are aging.**

Since time immemorial, and even more recently since the beginning of OHA’s existence, ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i has been acknowledged as foundational to our culture and identity as kānaka (Hawaiian people). Accordingly, OHA has invested its own resources into various Native Hawaiian organizations perpetuating ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i through grants and programs. With regards to Hawaiian medium education, OHA has invested \$6.88 million into Hawaiian-focused charter schools to address funding inequities.⁴ OHA has also provided funding to Kahuawaiola, Indigenous Teacher Education Program, that contributes to the speaker to teacher pathway which has proven to be successful in developing kumu kaiapuni.

In 2019, the Hawai‘i Supreme Court clarified the state’s constitutional mandate to provide access to Hawaiian medium education, and directed the state to make “all reasonable efforts” to provide such access.⁵ OHA recognizes that the Department of Education (DOE) is in the process of addressing the increasing demand for kula kaiapuni in furtherance of this mandate. Currently, nearly 100 kumu kaiapuni are needed to fully staff our already established kaiapuni schools.⁶ The DOE is working to address these unique challenges experienced by kumu kaiapuni and ‘ohana who choose to send their keiki to kula kaiapuni,⁷ and OHA looks forward to being a partner to develop and work towards solutions together to address the kumu kaiapuni shortage.

³ University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa College of Education, Territorial Hawai‘i Timeline, <https://coe.hawaii.edu/territorial-history-of-schools/territorial-hawaii-timeline/> (last accessed on April 2, 2026).

⁴ Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 2025 Annual Report, https://www.oha.org/wp-content/uploads/2025annualreport_WEB.pdf (last accessed on April 2, 2026).

⁵ See generally *Clarabal v. Dep't of Educ.*, 145 Hawai‘i 69, 73, 446 P.3d 986, 990-93 (2019), available at <https://www.courts.state.hi.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/SCAP-16-0000475.pdf> (last accessed on April 2, 2026).

⁶ Associated Press, *Hawaiian language immersion schools popular, but number of qualified teachers doesn't meet demand*, <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/hi/hawaii/news/2026/01/06/hawaiian-language-immersion-schools-popular--but-number-of-qualified-teachers-doesn-t-meet-demand>, January 5, 2026.

⁷ Hawai‘i Department of Education, *HIDOE announces new Kaiapuni priority placement process to support growing demand*, <https://hawaiipublicschools.org/2026->

OHA Appreciates Steadfast, Interested ‘Ohana Who Have Brought Needed Progress with the ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Movement and Kula Kaiapuni.

This resolution strategically builds upon the work of community, specifically ‘ohana who have specific interests in their keiki attending kaiapuni at Kapolei. Much of the progress made with the Hawaiian language movement, and urging the state to uphold its constitutional kuleana to provide “access to Hawaiian medium education,” has come about due to the advocacy of ‘ohana keenly interested in kaiapuni. These dedicated ‘ohana have gone through great lengths to secure kula kaiapuni as an option for their ‘ohana even volunteered in various capacities such as: substitute teachers, changing careers to become kumu kaiapuni, assisting with other logistics such as transportation, assisting with the development of school and curriculum-related materials that are not easily available in the Hawaiian language, testifying before various boards and agencies, in addition to seeking all remedies available under the law. More specifically with this resolution, interested ‘ohana have been tirelessly working with various decisionmakers, many of which are listed as Committee members in this resolution, to establish a K-12 kula kaiapuni. OHA appreciates the efforts of all ‘ohana and stands ready to be a partner with all key stakeholders and decisionmakers to work towards solutions together.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

SCR-162-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 12:03:45 PM

Testimony for EDN on 4/16/2026 2:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Charmaine Doran	Pearl City NB	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of SCR162. On behalf of the Pearl City Neighborhood Board, we extend our appreciation to Rep. La Chica for her early leadership in introducing this measure, as well as to the many other legislators in the House and Senate for continuing to advance this initiative.

Since 2025, establishing a standalone K–12 Kaiapuni pathway in Kapolei has been a legislative priority for our board. Right now, families from ‘Aiea through Wai‘anae have very few options and face long commutes to access immersion education. A consolidated campus in Kapolei would be efficient and affordable, foster a stronger school community and student pride.

SCR162 creates an opportunity for shared decision-making with the community and for building lasting partnerships with Leeward Community College and UH West O‘ahu, alongside the Department of Education, the Board of Education, and the Office of Hawaiian Education. These collaborations can truly strengthen Kaiapuni by supporting an educational pathway that is community-driven and guided by grassroots planning — an approach far more effective and efficient than retrofitting later.

From a planning perspective, this aligns education with the rapid growth already underway in West O‘ahu and prevents higher costs down the road. Additionally, research confirms what we know in our na‘au: children grounded in their ancestral language develop stronger cognitive skills and deeper cultural resilience. ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i is not an elective. It is a foundation.

Today more than ever — when culture is being attacked nationally and Native programs face cuts — it is essential for Hawai‘i, one of the nation’s few minority-majority states, to reinforce our commitment to ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, one of the most unique and defining elements of who we are.

I respectfully urge the committee to pass SCR162.

Mahalo for your consideration.



'Apelila 14, 2026

Aloha e Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica and Members of the House Committee on Education,

My name is Kiana Rodriguez. I am a resident of Hālawā and a strong supporter of kaiapuni education with a keiki in Papa 8 at Ke Kula Kaiapuni 'o Kapolei and another who will be entering kindergarten next school year. I am sharing testimony in support of SCR 162, which convenes a shared decision-making committee to develop an action plan to establish a K-12 Kaiapuni school in Kapolei.

I support these resolutions because:

- This project will strengthen public and private partnerships to bring a K-12 kula kaiapuni in 'Ewa to fruition and address the systemic gaps that exist for Hawaiian Immersion education.
- Community members and parents will have a voice in the decision-making process based on their lived experience and expertise in our children's education.

The long-term benefit of these resolutions will allow generations of Hawaiian Immersion learners and their 'ohana to be educated in their community through the official and indigenous language of Hawai'i.

Accessibility to Hawaiian Immersion education is deeply personal to my 'ohana. We enrolled our daughter at Ke Kula Kaiapuni 'o Waiāu when she was five years old because they could provide her with a strong connection to our culture in ways I lacked growing up in the Hawaiian diaspora. We chose kaiapuni education for her, even though at the time, there was no reasonable path for her to continue on after she graduated elementary school. The opening of Ke Kula Kaiapuni 'o Kapolei gave her back the choice to keep pursuing her education ma ka 'Ōlelo Hawai'i.



As my son approaches kindergarten, we are again faced with hurdles regarding accessibility as the demand for kaiapuni is skyrocketing. The only kula kaiapuni for elementary school in 'Ewa Moku is at capacity and commuting to another part of the island for school isn't realistic for us if they cannot take him. These resolutions support stakeholders to create an actionable plan so more 'ohana can choose kaiapuni education.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify. I urge the committee to vote in favor of Resolution 162.

E ola mau ka 'Ōlelo Hawai'i!

Me ke aloha,

Kiana Rodriguez

Kiana Rodriguez
Hope Pelekikena
Ke 'Alohi 'O 'Ewa



April 14, 2026

Aloha mai e Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the House Committee on Education,


I am Andrea Dias-Machado, President of Ke 'Alohi 'o 'Ewa (KA'E). I am sharing testimony in strong support of SCR 162.

"A'ohe pau ka 'ike i ka hālau ho'okahi. All knowledge is not taught in the same school. One can learn from many sources. This 'Ōlelo No'eau acknowledges that we are stronger when we wili 'ia, weave together the strengths, talents and resources we individually possess and align them toward a common purpose. Our kupuna always understood the power and value of collective impact.

These resolutions will provide an ala, a pathway for the DOE, UH System and the community to achieve collective impact through a common agenda that will create a critically needed K-12 kula kaiapuni in Kapolei for generations of Hawaiian immersion learners now and into perpetuity. Mahalo nui for your time, presence and the opportunity to testify. I strongly urge the committees to vote in favor of both resolutions for the mauiola, health and wellbeing of our communities.

E ola mau ka 'Ōlelo Hawai'i.

Me ke aloha,
Andrea Dias-Machado



Rooted in the ancestral brilliance of our kupuna, this shared decision-making committee represents the rediscovery of the wealth that has always existed in the moku of 'Ewa to “feed and nurture” all through Hawaiian Immersion Education. This committee brings together the waiwai, the wealth of talents, strengths and resources that exists within the Department of Education, the University of Hawai'i System and the community to collectively invest in a teacher training and recruitment program, curriculum development founded upon place-based knowledge integrated into academic content areas and sound facilities planning and acquisition to develop and sustain a robust system of Hawaiian Education for our keiki.

Our keiki and 'ōpio are the wai, the most precious lifegiving resource of our community. As such, we must “e ho'i ka wai,” return our keiki to be educated in their place and contribute to the mauliola, health and wellbeing of their communities.

Mahalo nui for your time, presence and the opportunity to testify. I strongly urge the committee to vote in favor of House Resolution 171 and House Concurrent Resolution 181.

Me ke aloha,

Andrea Dias-Machado
Pelekikena (President)
Ke 'Alohi 'o 'Ewa



SCR-162-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/14/2026 7:54:16 PM

Testimony for EDN on 4/16/2026 2:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Edward Hale	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

April 14, 2026

Aloha e Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica and Members of the House Committee on Education,

My name is Kaiponohea Hale. I am a native of Pauoa, O‘ahu, and a very strong supporter and advocate of kaiapuni education. I am sharing testimony in support of SCR 162, which convenes a shared decision making committee to develop an action plan to establish the very first K-12 Kaiapuni school in Kapolei.

I lend my support to this resolution because:

- This project will strengthen public and private partnerships to bring a K-12 kula kaiapuni in ‘Ewa to fruition and address the systemic gaps that exist for Hawaiian Immersion education.
- Community members and parents will have a voice in the decision making process based on their lived experience and expertise in our children’s education.

The long-term benefit of this resolution will allow generations of Hawaiian Immersion learners and their ‘ohana to finally have educational equity and be educated in their community through the official and indigenous language of Hawai‘i.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify. I strongly urge the committee to vote in favor of Resolution 162.

E ola mau ka 'Ōlelo Hawai'i!

Me ka na'au aloha,

E. Kaiponohea Hale

SCR-162-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/14/2026 7:56:31 PM

Testimony for EDN on 4/16/2026 2:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carla King	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica and Members of the House Committee on Education,

My name is Carla King. I am a resident of Aiea, tūtū wahine of a student at Ke Kula Kaiapuni ‘o Kapolei, and a strong supporter of kaiapuni education. I am sharing testimony in support of SCR 162, which convenes a shared decision making committee to develop an action plan to establish a K-12 Kaiapuni school in Kapolei.

I support this resolution because:

- This project will strengthen public and private partnerships to bring a K-12 kula kaiapuni in ‘Ewa to fruition and address the systemic gaps that exist for Hawaiian Immersion education.
- Community members and parents will have a voice in the decisionmaking process based on their lived experience and expertise in our children’s education.

The long-term benefit of this resolution will allow generations of Hawaiian Immersion learners and their ‘ohana to finally have educational equity and be educated in their community through the official and indigenous language of Hawai‘i.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify. I urge the committee to vote in favor of Resolution 162.

E ola mau ka ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i!

Me ke aloha,

Carla King

SCR-162-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/14/2026 7:58:20 PM

Testimony for EDN on 4/16/2026 2:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James Engle	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica and Members of the House Committee on Education,

My name is James Engle. I am a resident of Aiea, have a loved one attending Ke Kula Kaiapuni ‘o Kapolei, and a strong supporter of kaiapuni education. I am sharing testimony in support of SCR 162, which convenes a shared decision making committee to develop an action plan to establish a K-12 Kaiapuni school in Kapolei.

I support this resolution because:

- This project will strengthen public and private partnerships to bring a K-12 kula kaiapuni in ‘Ewa to fruition and address the systemic gaps that exist for Hawaiian Immersion education.
- Community members and parents will have a voice in the decisionmaking process based on their lived experience and expertise in our children’s education.

The long-term benefit of this resolution will allow generations of Hawaiian Immersion learners and their ‘ohana to finally have educational equity and be educated in their community through the official and indigenous language of Hawai‘i.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify. I urge the committee to vote in favor of Resolution 162.

E ola mau ka ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i!

Me ke aloha,

James Engle

SCR-162-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 5:51:37 AM

Testimony for EDN on 4/16/2026 2:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Theresa Tehiva	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a resident of Pearl City, O'ahu and a parent at Ke Kula Kaiapuni 'o Kapolei. I strongly support SCR 162 because it ensures educational equity and allows our keiki to be educated in their own community ma ka 'Ōlelo Hawai'i.

SCR-162-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 2:00:40 PM

Testimony for EDN on 4/16/2026 2:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Ahana	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I continue to be in strong support of SCR162. Mahalo.

SCR-162-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 3:49:11 PM

Testimony for EDN on 4/16/2026 2:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mahina Maialoha	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a resident of Pearl City and a parent at Ke Kula Kaiapuni ‘o Kapolei. I strongly support SCR 162 because it ensures educational equity and allows our keiki to be educated in their own community ma ka ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i.