



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

Date: 04/06/2026

Time: 01:00 PM

Location: CR 229 & Videoconference

Committee: EDU

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SCR194, URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO MEET THE CRITERIA NECESSARY TO OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZE CHEERLEADING AS A TITLE IX SPORT IN HAWAII.

Purpose of Bill: Urging The Department Of Education To Meet The Criteria Necessary To Officially Recognize Cheerleading As A Title Ix Sport In Hawaii.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports SCR 194, which urges the Department to meet the criteria necessary to officially recognize cheerleading as a Title IX sport in Hawaii.

The Department is deeply committed to Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) and the tenets it upholds. The Department also understands the importance of gender equity in our interscholastic athletic programs and recognizes the abilities and efforts of all interscholastic student athletes.

The Department currently offers 21 interscholastic sports statewide. Although not all high school competitive athletic programs offer all 21 interscholastic sports, the vast majority of the Department's high schools have cheer teams: (1) Sideline Cheer, and/or (2) Competitive Cheer. It is important to note that the purpose of Sideline Cheer and Competitive Cheer differs. Sideline Cheer primarily provides support to other interscholastic teams during their competitive events. The main focus of Competitive Cheer teams, however, is participation in cheer competitions at both the league and state levels.

Although Competitive Cheer has been offered to student athletes since 1999, Competitive Cheer athletes have not been counted as "student-athletes" for purposes of Title IX, as defined by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) of the U.S. Department of Education. Proactive measures and actions have been taken to meet the criteria of a sport as defined by OCR. This includes aligning competitive cheer with other established varsity sports, primarily by adding more competition opportunities.

During the 2024-2025 school year, there were 504 Competitive Cheer athletes.

Both Sideline Cheer and Competitive Cheer teams are co-ed sports, however the majority of cheer athletes for sideline and competitive cheer are female. The Department believes that moving forward to recognize Competitive Cheer as an “official” sport for purposes of Title IX would help increase female student-athlete participation totals.

The Department notes that future funding to support this endeavor may be requested, however, the Department will make its best effort to look within itself first.

For these reasons, the Department supports SCR 194 and appreciates the Legislature’s continued commitment to equity and inclusion in Hawai’i’s public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SCR 194.



April 5, 2026

Position: **SUPPORT** of **SCR194/SR183**, URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO MEET THE CRITERIA NECESSARY TO OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZE CHEERLEADING AS A TITLE IX SPORT IN HAWAII.

To: Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Education

From: Llasmin Chaîne, LSW, Executive Director, Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of SCR194/SR183, URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO MEET THE CRITERIA NECESSARY TO OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZE CHEERLEADING AS A TITLE IX SPORT IN HAWAII.

Hearing: Monday, April 6, 2026, 1:00 p.m.
Conference Room 229, State Capitol

The Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women **supports SCR194/SR183**, which addresses the recognition of competitive cheerleading in relation to Title IX.

As a statewide feminist government body, our mission is to advance equality and equity for women and girls in Hawaii through advocacy, education, and policy development. This resolution is significant to our work because **equitable access to athletic opportunities is a core component of gender equity**, and Title IX remains a critical tool in ensuring that women and girls receive fair treatment in educational settings, including sports.

Recognizing competitive cheerleading as an athletic opportunity under Title IX can help address disparities in sports participation, resource allocation, and representation for female students. Such recognition aligns with best practices in promoting equality, inclusion and the visibility of female athletes, empowering individuals, supporting their achievements, and fostering leadership. It also advances the broader goal of ensuring that state programs and policies reflect the experiences and needs of women and girls.

We respectfully urge this Committee to **pass SCR194/SR183**, expanding athletic opportunities and gender equity efforts.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.

SCR-194

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 1:07:23 PM

Testimony for EDU on 4/6/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jody Lynn Bill	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in support of the safety of Hawai'i's cheerleaders. The American Medical Association recommended cheerleading to be designated a sport in 2014. It's time for the Department of Education to meet the criteria for this designation in order to protect our athletes and ensure their safety, as they would in any other sport. They deserve our diligence in developing protocol and safety measures as they compete in interscholastic competitions at the state and national level, traveling as other sports teams do.

Good afternoon,

I am so grateful to see that progress is being made towards giving the athletes involved in high school Cheer the same recognition, funding, and protection as the other sports offered at the high school level.

I have two Mililani High School graduates ('20, '23) and one more who will graduate in 2028. My 2023 graduate was a four-year athlete on the Mililani baseball team, and he continued his sport into college. He played the sport from the time he was 4 years-old, and he worked extensively to excel at it. He played for the Mililani All-Star team in elementary and middle school, and he supplemented league play with weights, conditioning, and travel play. In high school, practices started weeks before the official season, there was Legion play every summer, and the Varsity boys helped fundraise for the JV tournaments, and vice versa. It seemed like an all-encompassing, very intense sport.

Then along came Cheer, and we realized baseball had only been a drop in the bucket. In her two years at Mililani High School, our daughter Josie has participated in JV and Varsity Sideline Cheer, JV and Varsity State Competitive Cheer, and two years of NCA Competitive Cheer. The practices and events for these teams run from June through May every year. I'll say that again. June. Through May. It is an all-season sport. Yet, the cheerleaders do not get the same access to practice space, PT, uniforms, equipment, and other sports services as their counterparts because their "activity" is only considered a Fall activity as an accessory to the football team. Yes, the Cheerleaders are on the sidelines of the football fields, gyms, and courts cheering for all of the other athletes at their school and leading the pep rallies. Yes, they participate in service events, run concessions, march in parades, and volunteer across the island, but they do all of this while simultaneously preparing for their own competitions. Their "season" is tied to football rather than their own state competition, and the NCA competition, which doesn't even take place until the Winter sport season.

Cheer at the high school level is not waving poms around a track. Josie has done gymnastics since she was 4 years-old, moving into competitive gymnastics at 7. She has taken dance and extensive tumbling and stunt classes to get to her level. She uses coordination and agility to tumble, core strength and balance to fly, and strength and eye-hand coordination to carry her fellow athletes safely above her head. They are the same skills she uses when she pole vaults, high jumps, and sprints in Track and Field, and the risks involved in Cheer are some of the highest in all competitive sports. Furthermore, she has learned these Cheer skills under the guidance and training of amazing coaches, who have all come through their own high school programs where they were also not considered full athletes by the state, and now are not given the same consideration as coaches as their "sport" counterparts. It's time we give them their due.

I know this is just the first step, but I trust in this leadership that I voted for, and I'm sure you will see this through to its completion. Even though my daughter will probably have graduated by the time that happens, I want all of the elementary and middle school girls in gyms and weight rooms and dance studios across our beautiful state to have a different future, given to them by the legacy of all of the athletes and coaches who came before them. Please move SCR194 forward.

Thank you,
Susan Hawes