



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Judiciary
Wednesday, February 17, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.

By
Bonnie Irwin
Chancellor
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

SB 1384 – RELATING TO EDUCATION

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary:

Aloha e nā alaka'i o ka 'aha'ōlelo o Hawai'i nei,

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony on SB 1384. The University of Hawai'i at Hilo (UH Hilo) supports the distinctive provisions of SB 1384 relating to the representation of Hawaiian language medium education on early education. UH Hilo is home to Ka Haka 'Ula o Ke'elikōlani, College of Hawaiian Language, who has been leading efforts to revitalize the Hawaiian language while also serving as a model to national and international indigenous communities who also seek to revive their endangered languages. With support from the Hawai'i State Legislature, UH Hilo/Ka Haka 'Ula has established a complete baccalaureate through to PhD program that offers high quality education to develop capacity for Hawaiian medium education and the further advancement of Hawaiian and indigenous languages writ large.

The distinctive provisions of SB1384 allow for consecutive terms for the representative of Hawaiian language medium early education. There is an extreme shortage of qualified individuals for all aspects of education through Hawaiian. This provision allows the state access to important contributions from the small pool of highly qualified individuals in this highly distinctive area of education of our state.

The introduction of SB 1384 indicates an awareness of the unique challenges of developing high quality education through Hawaiian in the state and leadership in addressing those challenges.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to submit testimony and support this bill.

SB-1384

Submitted on: 2/11/2021 4:00:46 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/17/2021 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Gerard Silva	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments:

NOBODY should be Exempt. Term lemits should apply to all the same way.

We oppose any changes!

LATE



SB1384
RELATING TO EDUCATION
Ke Kōmike ‘Aha Kenekoa o ka Ho‘okolokolo

Pepeluali 17, 2021

10:00 a.m.

Hālāwai Keleka‘a‘ike

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** SB1384, which would facilitate the state’s kuleana to ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i by allowing for consistent and continued representation for Hawaiian medium early learning providers on the state’s Early Learning Board (ELB). The perpetuation of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i is critical to the evolving culture, health, and well-being of Native Hawaiians, and this measure may be crucial to ensuring the continued use and growth of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i in Hawai‘i and beyond. **As such, OHA urges the Committee to pass this measure, and respectfully recommends removing the sunset provision in order to more fully realize its intended benefits.**

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 1978,¹ much remains to be done to ensure the re-normalization of the Hawaiian language in the Hawaiian Islands. Ensuring that our early learning system and policies recognize the importance of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i immersion – which may also have significant developmental benefits – for Hawai‘i’s infants, toddlers, and preschoolers is essential to this goal. Accordingly, it is critical to have continuous and consistent representation of Hawaiian medium early learning providers on the ELB.

However, the ELB seat for a “representative of Hawaiian medium early learning providers,” historically filled by the ‘Aha Pūnana Leo, is currently limited only to two, two-year consecutive terms.² Thus, the “Hawaiian medium early learning provider” representative may not serve more than a maximum of four consecutive years. This poses a significant challenge for a representative with the requisite experience and institutional knowledge to consistently fill this position, and has limited the ability of the ‘APL representative from building the institutional knowledge and presence necessary to effectively advocate for the importance and value of a Hawaiian medium early education. Notably, this seat is currently empty and the ELB is suffering from the lack of ‘APL’s voice, which has otherwise consistently ensured that all ELB members understand and recognize the essential role of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i medium programming in the development and education of Hawai‘i’s growing keiki.

¹ HAW. CONST. ART. XV SEC. 4.

² HRS §302L-1.6(10) sets a two-year term for the representative of Hawaiian medium early learning providers; HRS § 26-34(a) provides that “[n]o person shall be appointed consecutively to more than two terms as a member of the same board or commission[.]”

By exempting the Hawaiian-medium representative from the general two-term limit in HRS § 26-34(a), SB1384 will accordingly enable a representative of Hawaiian medium early education to maintain a consistent Hawaiian voice on the ELB, and thereby help to fulfill the greater mission to perpetuate and normalize the state's official language of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i.

OHA does note that this measure is currently drafted with a sunset date of June 30, 2025. Such a sunset date may limit the ability of the "Hawaiian medium early learning provider" representative to maintain a continuous and consistent presence on the ELB in subsequent future years. **Accordingly, we respectfully urge the Committee to remove the language from this measure that would impose a repeal date of June 30, 2025, as found on page 3, lines 1-2.**

The strength and endurance of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i is intrinsically connected to the health and wellbeing of the Native Hawaiian people, and it is part of what makes Hawai'i an authentic, unique, and beautiful place for all our local keiki to enjoy, learn, and ultimately thrive. **E ola mau ka 'Ōlelo Hawai'i!**

Accordingly, OHA urges the Committee to **PASS** SB1384. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.