


[EXTERNAL] NBI 25-42

From Les Murashige <[REDACTED]>

Date Mon 6/1/2026 9:56 AM

To HTSB <htsb@hawaii.gov>

 1 attachment (17 KB)

Felicia Letter.docx;

To all

I am submitting this letter in support of NBI 25-42

Respectfully

Les Murashige

Les Murashige
2730 Kanani Street
Lihue, Hawaii 96766

To the reader,

Aloha, my name is Les Murashige, I am writing to submit this letter of character of Felicia Villalobos. First, a little about myself, in hopes of giving this critique some credence.

I retired from the airline industry after nearly 40 years. In my career I have worked for various carriers in Hawaii and provided consulting for various carriers in the US and Canada. My last position was President and CEO of Hawaii Island Air.

I first met Felicia when I joined the Hawaii Teachers Standards Board in 2015 and continued to work with her till 2022. During my time there Felicia progressed from a board member, to the board chair person, to HTSB license specialist and ultimately the Executive Director. I worked closely with Felicia as the Chair of the Budget, Personnel and Strategic Planning Committee. In all our meeting and discussions I found her to be very knowledgeable, respectful to all and focused on the task at hand.

During my tenor I found Felicia to be very competent with policies, by laws and procedures in accordance with State of Hawaii Statutes and Rules. But the growth and maturity of her character over those 7 years is what impressed me. Felicia has the ability to envision a creative, feasible idea, formulate its practical application and determine a path for diffusion. While flexible and open to varying viewpoints, I found her unwavering strength to protect the mission to be paramount.

I have been fortunate to have met, worked and learned from some amazing people in my career. In my opinion, Felicia embodies a lot of the characteristics that make organizations better because they choose to make a difference.

In earnest,


Les Murashige

[EXTERNAL] Testimony in Support of NBI 25-41 and NBI 25-42

From Katina Soares <[REDACTED]>

Date Mon 6/1/2026 5:30 PM

To HTSB <htsb@hawaii.gov>

 1 attachment (175 KB)

Testimony for NBI 25 41 and 25 42 HTSB EDVillalobos LOR 6.1.26.pdf;

Good afternoon,

Please accept this letter as testimony in support of NBI 25-41 and NBI 25-42 for the HTSB Meeting on June 3, 2026. Mahalo!

--

Katina M. Soares, PhD

Principal

Molokai High School

School Phone: 808-567-7100

Direct Phone: [REDACTED]

www.molokaihighschool.org

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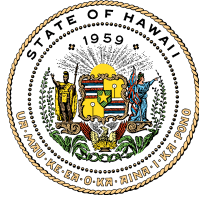
**MOLOKAI
HIGH SCHOOL**



Farmers of Land and Sea - Nā Kia‘i mai uka a i kai

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JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



KEITH T. HAYASHI
SUPERINTENDENT

**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
MOLOKAI HIGH SCHOOL
P.O. BOX 158
HO'OLEHUA, HI 96729**

June 1, 2026

Dear Sir or Madam,

It is a privilege to write this letter of recommendation for Felicia Villalobos to continue as the Executive Director of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB). Serving as a Board member and a high school principal in a rural community, I have witnessed firsthand the exceptional leadership, strategic vision, and steadfast commitment Ms. Villalobos brings to our state's education system.

While some may misinterpret her strict adherence to standard operating procedures as inflexibility, I have known her "inflexibility" to be a resolute refusal to bend laws, rules, or policies at the expense of teacher quality. Where critics might perceive an intense management style, I see a fierce, necessary advocate who protects our future teachers from entities seeking to profit from them rather than serve our students. Over the last five years, Ms. Villalobos has successfully transformed a grossly understaffed agency into a fully staffed, efficient, and highly effective organization driven by passionate professionals.

Far from being uncollaborative, Ms. Villalobos has actively built bridges across Hawai'i's educational landscape. She has organized vital workgroups, established national networks through regional and national conferences, and launched the annual HTSB Summit uniting Board members, Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs), the DOE, and key stakeholders. This collaborative approach ensures that state-level policy is always grounded in the practical realities faced by our complex school communities.

A defining hallmark of Ms. Villalobos's leadership is her absolute fidelity to legal and ethical standards. She navigates the complexities of the Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) and Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR) with immense precision. Serving as a vital bridge between high-level policy design and operational reality, she ensures the Board's procedures are transparent, fair, and objective. With the support of counsel, her meticulous commitment provides the legal clarity and procedural integrity necessary to defend the Board's actions and maintain public trust.

As a school leader, I deeply appreciate her unwavering commitment to protecting the public and the profession. In a climate where teacher shortages pressure systems to seek convenient shortcuts, Ms. Villalobos champions the philosophy that a shortage never justifies lowering the bar.

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Crucially, she balances these rigorous standards with visionary innovation. She has consistently provided the Board with actionable, research-based pathways to strengthen the educator pipeline. By championing the Educators Rising framework and the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program to the Board for funding and approval, she has laid the groundwork for sustainable "grow-your-own" initiatives. These efforts are vital for rural and isolated communities like ours, ensuring we can cultivate local talent into fully certified, high-quality educators.

Ms. Villalobos does not simply oversee a state agency; she champions an ecosystem of excellence. Her commitment to professional growth is evident in her receptiveness to Board feedback and annual stakeholder evaluations, which she actively utilizes to refine organizational performance and elevate her leadership. Her deep institutional knowledge, combined with an innovative mindset, has empowered the HTSB to transition from a purely regulatory body into a proactive leader in educator workforce development. You will not find a more dedicated or resilient leader. I have full confidence in her vision and highly endorse her continued tenure as Executive Director.

Respectfully submitted,




Katina M. Soares, PhD
Principal

[EXTERNAL] Testimony

From Kristi Miyamae <[REDACTED]>

Date Tue 6/2/2026 11:52 AM

To HTSB <htsb@hawaii.gov>

 1 attachment (97 KB)

NBI 25 41 & NBI 25 42 ED Villalobos evaluation and reappointment .pdf;

Aloha,

Please accept my letter as testimony in support of NBI 25-41 and NBI 25-42 for the General Meeting schedule on June 3, 2026.

Thank you,
Kristi Miyamae
Public School teacher and leader
Board Member and Board Chair, Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board, 2020-2026

June 1, 2026

Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board
650 Iwilei Road, Suite 268
Honolulu, HI 96817

Re: NBI 25-41 The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board Executive Director's Evaluation Recommendation for 2025-2026 and NBI 25-42 The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board Executive Director Recommendation to the Board of Education

Dear Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board Members,

I write with unwavering conviction in strong support of NBI 25-41 and NBI 25-42, endorsing a commendable rating and urging the reappointment of Felicia Villalobos as Executive Director of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB). After six years of working alongside her, including two as board chair, I am prepared to state categorically that she is among the most qualified, dedicated, and mission-driven leaders this agency has ever had the privilege of being guided by. Hawai'i's students, teachers, and communities are better served because of her stewardship, and this Board would be well-served to retain her institutional knowledge and leadership.

Unmatched Dedication and Mission-Centered Leadership

Executive Director Villalobos has made the mission and vision of the HTSB her professional north star. She is among the most dedicated and hardworking professionals I have had the privilege of knowing, one who routinely works seven days a week, often putting in ten or more hours a day, not out of obligation, but out of genuine commitment to the work. That dedication is evident in everything she does: responding promptly to correspondence, developing clear and compelling presentations, and contributing meaningfully to discussions on best practices in licensing standards.

Every conversation she engages in, whether with a classroom teacher, university professor, state licensing director, or legislator is anchored by a single unwavering goal: ensuring that Hawai'i's children are taught by qualified, excellent teachers. She advocates for high standards not as a bureaucratic exercise, but because she believes, deeply and without reservation, that it is what our students deserve.

National Leadership and Evident-Informed Policy

Executive Director Villalobos actively engages at the national level, sharing best practices from other states with our education leaders and board members so that policy decisions are well-informed. She was instrumental in advancing the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program and Educators Rising in our state, and in elevating the National Board Collective as a pathway to teaching excellence. Her national perspective strengthens our local decision-making in meaningful ways.

She has built a staff with specialized skills essential to the agency's operations and invests in their continued professional growth through conferences and webinars. She regularly consults with licensing agencies in other states to identify effective practices and strengthen our professional fitness and licensure guidelines. Her collaboration extends far beyond the agency: nationally, she has cultivated strong relationships with organizations including National Grow Your Own, NASDTEC, CAEP, AAQEP, and AASPA. Locally, she maintains active partnerships with educational executive directors, Native Pacific Education and Culture groups, legislators, principals, teachers, and community members. Her Executive Director's report reflects the breadth and depth of these connections.

Restoring Compliance and Protecting the State from Legal Risk

When she assumed the Executive Director role, there were longstanding policy gaps that required immediate attention. Her commitment to compliance enabled the board to address inconsistencies that had rendered our licensure non-reciprocal with other states. She was unafraid to address State Approved Teacher Education Programs (SATEP) directly and to elevate awareness at the national level of the harm caused by those gaps. She made the board aware of errors institutions were making that affected teachers from being licensed. There were also errors that could have put the state in legal jeopardy. These are some of the tasks that Executive Director Villalobos tackled head on to protect not only the board, but the SATEPs and most importantly, the children of Hawai'i. Executive Director Villalobos possesses the foresight and institutional knowledge necessary to guide the board in developing, interpreting, and applying the policies that are central to the HTSB's mission.

Executive Director Villalobos ensures that board members have the information they need to make thoughtful, lawful decisions. She has invested countless hours in ensuring the HTSB's compliance with the Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) and the Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR). A regulatory licensing board exists to serve students and the public, not institutional interests. Executive Director Villalobos never loses sight of that purpose. She is, without question, the most knowledgeable person on teacher licensure in this state.

Transforming Educator Preparation Program Oversight

Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) were not being thoroughly vetted prior to her tenure. Once approved, programs had no obligation for cyclical review, a significant gap that Executive Director Villalobos has worked to close. The days of programs being rubber-stamped are over. EPPs are now expected to provide evidence of quality, reviewed by experienced panels that include university peers and practitioners with over twenty years of classroom expertise. I have personally observed several of these review sessions and can confirm that the process is serious, rigorous, and conducted with the depth our students deserve.

It bears emphasis: the Board, not the Executive Director, makes the final determination on program approval. Executive Director Villalobos provides the Board with well-organized, thorough information so that our decisions are fully informed and legally defensible. This is precisely the appropriate role of an Executive Director, and she fulfills it with excellence.

Addressing Criticism Directly and Fairly

I want to address, plainly and on the record, testimony suggesting that Executive Director Villalobos has not been collaborative, because this body deserves to make decisions based on the full picture, not a partial account.

As Board Chair for the past two years, I find it instructive that not a single EPP expressing concerns chose to contact me directly. Their dissatisfaction surfaced only after a board member elevated it to the Board of Education, a significant procedural omission that reflects a lack of good-faith engagement with the Board's own leadership structure. Upon learning of these concerns, we acted immediately: we consulted national accreditation agencies for guidance and convened a Day of Collaboration with EPPs and other stakeholders to gather input and ensure alignment with Hawai'i Administrative Rules and Board policy. The process is still ongoing, although testimony might suggest otherwise.

Executive Director Villalobos has consistently ensured that the Board operates in compliance with the law, and that is not a small thing. Legal compliance is the foundation of everything we do. Beyond that, she has repeatedly and proactively reached out to stakeholders and legislators, including the Hawai'i State Teachers Association (HSTA), inviting them to the table on numerous occasions throughout her term. That is not the behavior of someone unwilling to collaborate, that is the behavior of someone committed to the process, even when the invitation is not always met with equal enthusiasm on the other side.

I can speak to this personally. I have reached out to the HSTA president and chapters across the state, offering conversations and licensing presentations. I am grateful to those few who accepted. Not all did. Collaboration is a two-way commitment, and we cannot hold one party accountable for a breakdown when the other has not fully engaged.

What troubles me about the testimony this Board may hear is that it reflects a narrow view, a small microcosm of interactions taken out of context and used to pass sweeping judgment on a leader's character and effectiveness. That is not fair, and it is not the standard we hold anyone else to in this profession. We all need to do our homework thoroughly.

Leadership is not measured by whether everyone agrees with you. A leader who stands firm on legal and ethical obligations, even under pressure, is exactly the kind of leader a Standards Board needs. Attempts to discredit someone by characterizing it as inflexibility are a disservice to the HTSB's mission and to the public we serve.

Holding the Line on Quality During a Period of Teacher Shortage

In the face of persistent teacher shortages, there is enormous pressure to lower licensing standards in order to fill classrooms quickly. As a practicing classroom teacher with twenty-four years of experience, a fifteen-year instructor of professional development in Classroom Management, and a teacher mentor, I have seen firsthand the consequences when that pressure wins: teachers who leave the profession within their first years, candidates who are ill-equipped to manage the complexity of real classrooms, and students who bear the cost of

those failures. This year, I am losing two teachers on my team for these very reasons. We cannot afford to go down that path again.

Hawai'i needs a leader with the integrity, expertise, and institutional knowledge to hold the line on quality, while simultaneously working creatively to expand access to the profession through rigorous alternative pathways. Executive Director Villalobos embodies both imperatives. She is not easily replaced, and the cost of replacing her institutional knowledge would be substantial and lasting.

A Personal Reflection on Her Guidance

When I became chair, the learning curve was considerable. Executive Director Villalobos guided me patiently through the complexities of the role and the importance of upholding professional standards in the teaching profession. She responded to every question, even when I came to her with many at once, and whenever she needed to research an answer, she followed up promptly and thoroughly. Her guidance made me a more effective Board Chair, and by extension, I believe it made this Board more effective in its service to Hawai'i.

Together with Budget, Personnel, and Strategic Planning Committee Chair Mew, I conducted a comprehensive review of all five standards across the thirty-five sub-standards of her formal evaluation, encompassing assessments from board members, staff, and her own self-evaluation. That review has been presented to this Board so that a fully informed and impartial decision may be made. I urge each member to weigh the testimony offered carefully and to measure it against the standards with fairness and rigor.

Throughout her tenure, Executive Director Villalobos has carried out her responsibilities with unwavering consistency, integrity, and excellence. She is, without question, the most knowledgeable person on teacher licensure in the State of Hawai'i, a distinction that is not easily earned and not easily replaced.

The children and families of Hawai'i deserve principled, expert, and mission-driven leadership at the helm of this agency. Executive Director Villalobos embodies exactly that. I urge this Board to reappoint her without hesitation.

Mahalo for your consideration and your commitment to the teachers and students of Hawai'i.

Respectfully,

Kristi Miyamae


Public School teacher and leader
Board Member and Board Chair, Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board, 2020-2026

[EXTERNAL] Testimony: General Business Meeting_NBI 25-42_Oppose

From Robyn Awaa Lincoln <[REDACTED]>

Date Tue 6/2/2026 6:12 PM

To HTSB <htsb@hawaii.gov>

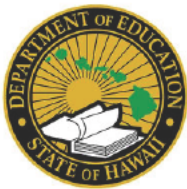
 1 attachment (484 KB)

HTSB GBM Testimony NBI 25 42 Oppose.pdf;

Aloha e,

On behalf of the Hawai'i State Department of Education, I am submitting the attached written testimony only to oppose Agenda Item VI. Committee Reports, Budget, Personnel, and Strategic Planning Committee: MEW, G. NBI 25-42.

Mahalo,
Robyn



Robyn 'Āwa'a Lincoln

Private Secretary

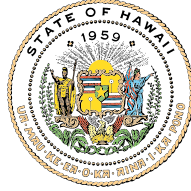
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JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



KEITH T. HAYASHI
SUPERINTENDENT

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

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Date: 06/03/2026

Meeting: General Business Meeting

TO: Hawaii Teacher Standards Board

FROM: Keith T. Hayashi
Superintendent 

SUBJECT: Testimony of the Hawaii State Department of Education in Opposition to New Business Item 25-42

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) respectfully provides testimony in opposition to New Business Item (NBI) 25-42, relating to the Hawaii Teachers Standards Board (HTSB) Executive Director Recommendation to the Board of Education.

The Department recognizes the significance of the HTSB's statutory role in licensing and certification standards for teachers in Hawaii. Licensing and certification support public confidence in the educators employed by Hawaii's public schools. The Department also recognizes that the HTSB has promoted teacher quality through programs such as the National Board Certification, and we acknowledge the passion and drive for quality that Executive Director Felicia Villalobos brings to her role. However, the Department has significant concerns about HTSB's operational direction under the current executive director.

The Department relies on the HTSB as a critical partner to ensure that our 258 schools have a quality workforce for Hawaii's students. The Department employs approximately 13,000 teachers licensed by the HTSB, including classroom teachers and vital support positions such as counselors, librarians, registrars, and resource teachers.

This year, approximately nine percent of our teachers were employed under an emergency hire permit because fully licensed teachers were unavailable. This growing reliance on emergency permits reflects severe structural issues in the teacher workforce, driven by:

- Declines in national and local enrollment in teacher preparation programs.

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- A sharp drop in HTSB's issuance of provisional licenses for new teachers (**986** in School Year 2024-2025, compared to an average of **1,356** annually over the previous five school years).
- Restrictive administrative actions taken by the HTSB.

The Department urgently needs a partner to address these workforce shortages, but we lack confidence or evidence that the HTSB's current direction supports meeting these needs. The Department has repeatedly asked the HTSB to balance workforce realities alongside actions focused on increasing the rigor of teacher licensing. Unfortunately, the HTSB Executive Director's consistent stance has been that HTSB's purview is strictly teacher quality, not workforce supply. This contradicts Section 302A-802, Hawai'i Revised Statutes, which explicitly directs the HTSB to consider *"the existing teacher applicant pool that is available in the State, as well as the nature and availability of existing preservice teacher training programs."*

The Department is deeply concerned that HTSB's future planning ignores this mandate. In the HTSB's proposed strategic plan (NBI 25-40), the former Chair's message acknowledges the shortage but states, *"We remain steadfast in our responsibility to ensure that quality is never compromised."* While the proposed plan outlines a strategy to expand community-based pathways via teacher-registered apprenticeships, HTSB's challenges with partners, including the Department, have slowed progress. Two years into a three-year federal grant, the registered apprenticeship program is still being established administratively, falling far short of its milestone to have more than 100 apprentices completing coursework and advancing toward licensure at this stage.

Furthermore, the Department is concerned that HTSB leadership has used the language of teacher quality to justify processes that create additional, bureaucratic steps for educators. High standards and efficient, teacher-centered systems are not mutually exclusive. Unnecessary procedural barriers undermine teacher quality by delaying licensure, discouraging strong candidates, and diverting educators' time away from classrooms and professional growth.

A clear example is last November's action regarding the submission of official records for licensure (NBI 25-15). While the Department fully supports document integrity, this policy change was enacted to deter fraud without presenting evidence demonstrating a systemic problem in Hawai'i that justified a broad burden on all teachers.

Compounding this issue, the policy is set to take effect on July 1, 2026. HTSB meeting minutes from November 14, 2025, note that the Executive Director promised to work closely with the Department and charter schools to ensure timely licensing. To date, with implementation less than a month away, the only communication the Department has received is a single promotional flyer containing less information than the policy materials presented last fall. This leaves teachers seeking licensure this summer facing increased administrative and financial hurdles without the promised operational support. While Department staff will meet with HTSB next week to discuss implementation, this lack of proactive communication is emblematic of a broader breakdown in partnership.

At a time when Hawai'i faces teacher recruitment and workforce challenges, the Department needs HTSB leadership that views our schools and educator preparation programs as vital partners in a shared mission. The work ahead requires a willingness to engage stakeholders

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early and the ability to distinguish between meaningful accountability and administrative requirements that simply delay and complicate the process.

Because the current leadership approach has not demonstrated the level of partnership required to meet these critical state challenges, the Department respectfully opposes NBI 25-42.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.