

Testimony**Name:** Christina Keaulana, PhD**Position:** Special Education Coordinator**Organization:** Leeward Community College**Meeting:** March 13, 2026**Agenda item:** TITLE: New Business Item 25-29 Leeward Community College's Special Education P-3 Initial Licensure Program Review Decision**Position:** Oppose with comment

The LCC SPED Program is seeking program approval to recommend completers for initial licensure in the grade band below: Special Education, P-3

The Program Review Committee cited they do not recommend the LCC SPED P-3 Initial Licensure program to the HTSB Board for the three reasons Commentary on each point addresses inaccuracies and discussion

- **POINT 1:** The SPED P-3 Initial Licensure program has about 22 semester credits. The Program

Review Committee expressed concern that post-baccalaureate students require additional courses and training in child development, working with special education students, educational theories, and developmentally appropriate practices, since their undergraduate degrees are likely not in education. Most post-baccalaureate programs are usually 30 semester credits.

- **RESPONSE to POINT 1:**

The APC in SPED PK-3 initial licensure program has 25 credits total. Of those, 21 credits, or 7 courses are special education methodology courses and 4 credits are related to the field practicum/student teaching. UHM's Post Bac in SPED also includes 21 credits of coursework, and 12 credits are related to field practicum experience/student teaching.

In addition to the five existing SPED methods courses in the 19cr APC in SPED, the three new Early Childhood Special Education courses designed were outlined in detail in the November 2025 LCC Response to HTSB Program Review Committee – A consolidated narrative addressing each recommendation in NBI 21-10 and summarizing key program revisions.

NEW COURSE: Early Childhood Development and Intervention – Theory into Practice – Newly developed ECE/ECSE foundational course with developmentally appropriate, SPED-embedded assignments.

	<p>respectful, affirming, and culturally responsive partnerships with all families that allow for the mutual exchange of knowledge and information.</p>
	<p>2.2 Candidates communicate clear, comprehensive, and objective information about resources and supports that help families to make informed decisions and advocate for access, participation, and equity in natural and inclusive environments.</p>
	<p>2.3 Candidates engage families in identifying their strengths, priorities, and concerns; support families to achieve the goals they have for their family and their young child’s development and learning; and promote families’ competence and confidence during assessment, individualized planning, intervention, instruction, and transition processes.</p>
<p>Standard 3: Collaboration and Teaming</p>	<p>3.1 Candidates apply teaming models, skills, and processes, including appropriate uses of technology, when collaborating and communicating with families; professionals representing multiple disciplines, skills, expertise, and roles; and community partners and agencies.</p>
	<p>3.2 Candidates use a variety of collaborative strategies when working with other adults that are evidence-based, appropriate to the task, culturally and linguistically responsive, and take into consideration the environment and service delivery approach.</p>
	<p>3.3 Candidates partner with families and other professionals to develop individualized plans and support the various transitions that occur for the young child and their family throughout the birth through 8 age span.</p>
<p>Standard 4: Assessment Processes</p>	<p>4.1 Candidates understand the purposes of formal and informal assessment, including ethical and legal considerations, and use this information to choose developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate, valid, reliable tools and methods that are responsive to the characteristics of the young child, family, and program.</p>
	<p>4.2 Candidates develop and administer informal assessments and/or select and use valid, reliable formal assessments using evidence-based practices, including technology, in partnership with families and other professionals.</p>
	<p>4.3 Candidates analyze, interpret, document, and share assessment information using a strengths-based approach with families and other professionals.</p>
	<p>4.4 Candidates, in collaboration with families and other team members, use assessment data to determine eligibility, develop child and family-based outcomes/goals, plan for interventions and instruction, and monitor progress to determine efficacy of programming.</p>

<p>Standard 5: Application of Curriculum Frameworks in the Planning of Meaningful Learning Experience</p>	<p>5.1 Candidates collaborate with families and other professionals in identifying an evidence-based curriculum addressing developmental and content domains to design and facilitate meaningful and culturally responsive learning experiences that support the unique abilities and needs of all children and families.</p>
	<p>5.2 Candidates use their knowledge of early childhood curriculum frameworks, developmental and academic content knowledge, and related pedagogy to plan and ensure equitable access to universally designed, developmentally appropriate, and challenging learning experiences in natural and inclusive environments.</p>
<p>Standard 6: Using Responsive and Reciprocal Interactions, Interventions, and Instruction</p>	<p>6.1 Candidates, in partnership with families, identify systematic, responsive, and intentional evidence-based practices and use such practices with fidelity to support young children’s learning and development across all developmental and academic content domains.</p>
	<p>6.2 Candidates engage in reciprocal partnerships with families and other professionals to facilitate responsive adult-child interactions, interventions, and instruction in support of child learning and development.</p>
	<p>6.3 Candidates engage in ongoing planning and use flexible and embedded instructional and environmental arrangements and appropriate materials to support the use of interactions, interventions, and instruction addressing developmental and academic content domains, which are adapted to meet the needs of each and every child and their family.</p>
	<p>6.4 Candidates promote young children’s social and emotional competence and communication, and proactively plan and implement function-based interventions to prevent and address challenging behaviors.</p>
	<p>6.5 Candidates identify and create multiple opportunities for young children to develop and learn play skills and engage in meaningful play experiences independently and with others across contexts.</p>
	<p>6.6 Candidates use responsive interactions, interventions, and instruction with sufficient intensity and types of support across activities, routines, and environments to promote child learning and development and facilitate access, participation, and engagement in natural environments and inclusive settings.</p>
	<p>6.7 Candidates plan for, adapt, and improve approaches to interactions, interventions, and instruction based on multiple sources of data across a range of natural environments and inclusive settings.</p>
<p>Standard 7: Professional and Ethical Practice</p>	<p>7.1 Candidates engage with the profession of EI/ECSE by participating in local, regional, national, and/or international activities and professional organizations.</p>

	7.2 Candidates engage in ongoing reflective practice and access evidence-based information to improve their own practices.
	7.3 Candidates exhibit leadership skills in advocating for improved outcomes for young children, families, and the profession, including the promotion of and use of evidence-based practices and decision-making.
	7.4 Candidates practice within ethical and legal policies and procedures. Field and Clinical Experience Standard.
Standard 8: Field and Clinical Experience	N/A

Below is a comparison of three Academic Plans for SPED ECE licensure programs leading to teacher licensure. Leeward CC's curriculum includes the most robust curriculum with regard to preparation in specialized instruction on SPED early childhood educator preparation including:

Leeward Community College Advanced Professional Certificate in SPED

Leads to licensure in SPED PK-3, K-6, 6-12 to add a field; SPED K-6, SPED 6-12 for initial licensure

21 credits of coursework

6cr of SPED ECE specific coursework, 15 cr embedded with SPED ECE curriculum

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Post Baccalaureate in Special Education

Leads to licensure in SPED PK-3, K-6, 6-12

21 credits of coursework

NO credits of SPED early childhood specific coursework in the UHM Post Baccalaureate in SPED.

The only difference in the academic plan for a candidate pursuing a PB in SPED for secondary education (6-12) and a PB in SPED for PK-3 is that a student would take:

SPED 421 (3cr) – for PreK-3 and K-6 candidates

Strategies for Reading Difficulties

instead of

SPED 652 (3cr) – Secondary candidates

Transition/Supported Employment

California State University San Bernardino

Leads to licensure in Early Childhood Special Education with EL Authorization

21 credits of coursework, this program includes 6cr of ECE specific coursework:

ESPE 6637 Seminar on Language and Literacy in EC Special Education

ESPE 6672 Birth to Age Three Methods in Early Childhood Special Education

- **POINT 2:** The Program Review Committee did not find that the newly developed courses would adequately prepare teacher candidates to develop their knowledge and skills regarding the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), working with families, developing and implementing interventions, and early childhood development.
- **RESPONSE to POINT 2:**

The newly developed courses were designed as part of a 4-year long Comprehensive Statewide Professional Development (CSPD) initiative that brings together cross-sector partners to strengthen Hawai'i's workforce serving infants, toddlers, and young children with disabilities and their families. Through collaboration among state agencies, universities, service providers, and families, CSPD supports the development of a coordinated system of professional preparation, ongoing professional development, and workforce sustainability. The curriculum design is rooted in the Hawai'i Early Childhood Personnel Clearinghouse Plan: A Strategic Framework for Building Workforce Quality and Equity as well as the Hawai'i Early Childhood State Plan. Leeward CC's new SPED ECE curriculum was designed to prepare teacher candidates to develop their knowledge and skills regarding the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), working with families, developing and implementing interventions, and early childhood development capitalizing on the collective expertise of a CSPD work team that consists of early childhood specialists who are amongst the highest caliber in the nation in their respective areas. The group includes special early childhood experts at the local, state and national levels including:

██████████ (CSPD Lead): provided consultation throughout the United States for the past 30 years, focusing on early intervention, professional development, and systems development including: Hawai'i Community Foundation, the City and County of Honolulu, the Early Intervention Training Program (EITP), the Center on Disability Studies at the University of Hawai'i, KCAA Preschools of Hawai'i, Easterseals Hawai'i. Past Chair of the Division Relations Committee (DRC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), a Past President of the Executive Board of Directors for the Division of Early Childhood (DEC), and one of the founding members of the Early Intervention-Early Childhood Professional Development Community of Practice (EIECCoP).

██████████: Infant and Early Childhood Behavioral Health (IECBH) Plan Coordinator

██████████: Early Childhood Action Strategy, State of Hawai'i Department of Health Early Intervention Section, Evaluation/IFSP/Services

██████████: UH Mānoa, Human Development and Family Studies

██████████: Leeward CC, Early Childhood Special Education Instructor

██████████ not only led the course development and curriculum redesign but she is part of the Preservice Personnel Development Workgroup which is a subgroup of this team that has met monthly to work on:

Strategic Focus

Strengthening higher education preparation programs so early childhood professionals graduate with the competencies needed to effectively support young children with disabilities and their families.

Key Goals

- Map and understand the current preservice preparation landscape in Hawai`i.
- Align university preparation programs with EI/ECSE competencies and standards.
- Ensure preservice programs incorporate family engagement and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Major Objectives

- Identify and compile all preservice programs in Hawaii, including:
 - Special Education
 - Speech-Language Pathology
 - Occupational Therapy
 - Physical Therapy
 - Birth–Five preparation programs
- Develop a statewide matrix of programs and competencies.
- Compile core competencies and national standards used by each discipline.
- Map coursework across programs to identify alignment and gaps.
- Crosswalk preservice curricula with EI/ECSE personnel standards.
- Embed family engagement frameworks such as:
 - Dual Capacity Framework
 - Protective Factors Framework
- Develop strategies to address preparation gaps identified through program analysis.

With all do respect to the Review Committee, the rigorous and methodical process undergone to design the new SPED ECE curriculum and the exceptional caliber of the SPED ECE team responsible for its development far surpasses what would constitute as “adequate” preparation teacher candidates to develop their knowledge and skills regarding the Individuals with

Disabilities Act (IDEA), working with families, developing and implementing interventions, and early childhood development.

- **POINT 3:** The evidence (e.g., course syllabi, assignments, and activities) did not clearly demonstrate how teacher candidates would develop the knowledge, concepts, and understanding needed to apply assessment and instructional practices that address the developmental and diverse needs of young children. The materials from LCC's Special Education programs, grades K-6 and 6-12, had not been revised or aligned with the specific requirements for preparing teachers for a SPED early childhood classroom.

- **RESPONSE to POINT 3:**

The course learning outcomes and assignment descriptions not only directly address how teacher candidates would develop the knowledge, concepts, and understanding needed to apply assessment and instructional practices that address the developmental and diverse needs of young children, but we also provided a crosswalk in a Program-Level Curriculum/Assessment/Standard Alignment Chart showing alignment with CEC Initial Practice-Based Professional Preparation Standards for Special Educators [Early Intervention (EI)/Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Standards]. Again, with all do respect, we do have concerns over the quality and integrity of this review process, as we have repeatedly provided substantial evidence to exceed the expectations established each round of review we have undergone. After careful review of the content we provided (please click on links) we did not receive any explanation of how the content would not address how teacher candidates would develop the knowledge, concepts, and understanding needed to apply assessment and instructional practices that address the developmental and diverse needs of young children.

NEW COURSE: Early Childhood Development and Intervention – Theory into Practice – Newly developed ECE/ECSE foundational course with developmentally appropriate, SPED-embedded assignments.

NEW COURSE: IDEA Part C/Part B (619) and IFSP/IEP Development – New early intervention/SPED methods course aligned with IDEA, HAR 11-140, HELDS, and CEC EC/ECSE standards.

SPED Early Childhood curriculum embedded in 5 existing core methodology courses linked below:

ED 330: Special Education Law and Individualized Education Program Development - Key Assessment: IEP Referral Process and Evaluation Determination

ED 331: Special Education Assessment - Key Assessment: Assessing a Young Child's Development and Developing Goals
ED 332: English Language Arts Instruction and Interventions - Key Assessment: Pre-Reading Activities
ED 332: English Language Arts Instruction and Interventions - Key Assessment: ELA Standards-Based Goals and Interventions
ED 334: Participating in a Professional Community - Key Assessment: Organizing a Professional Learning Community (PLC) / Professional Learning Network (PLN)
ED 335: Educational Technology for the Inclusive Classroom - Key Assessment: Low and High Tech Assistive Technology

Furthermore, the curricular preparation for SPED ECE has already been approved by three separate bodies with actual authority to review curricular quality and state/national alignment. The tremendous amount of disconnected review and non-transparent kickback we have undergone during the HTSB review process appears to be an abuse and overreach of authority. Institutions of Higher Education such as Leeward have their own systems to ensure quality of faculty, curriculum, instructional delivery, resources, and regular evaluation for accountability. Leeward Community College is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges and our Teacher Education Program is accredited by the [Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation](#) (AAQEP), a national, Council for Higher Education Accreditation-recognized agency founded in 2017 that accredits P-20 educator preparation programs. The initial review of the APC in SPED PK-12 back in 2017 stated “Leeward CC Advanced Professional Certificate in Special Education’s coursework is appropriate for adding the field of Special Education (PK-3, K-6, 6-12, K-12). The unit may recommend candidates for the following license fields: Special Education PK-3 Special Education K-6 Special Education 6-12 Special Education K-12.” only citing lack of instructional personnel as the reason why Leeward CC could only serve as an initial preparation program in SPED K-6 and SPED 6-12.

- On April 2021, [AAQEP reviewed Leeward CC’s APC in SPED for licensure in SPED PK-12. AAQEP grants full national accreditation for a 7-year term \(effective 4/30/21-6/30/2028\).](#) **NOTE: Leeward CC’s APC in SPED was granted accreditation by AAQEP as a SPED **PK-12** licensure program because the certificate is utilized as an “add-a-field” SATEP in PK-3, K-6, 6-12 and an initial licensure program in SPED K-6, 6-12.

- On December 27, 2016 the [Program Approval Request](#) was approved by the University of Hawai'i CCCAO and BOR as a provisional program SPED PK-12 then the program was approved on January 19, 2022 to transition from a provisional to permanently established program for [SPED PK-12](#).
- On June 2, 2017, HTSB stated in [NBI-16-40](#) that the "Leeward CC Advanced Professional Certificate in Special Education's coursework is appropriate for adding the field of Special Education (PK-3, K-6, 6-12, K-12). The unit may recommend candidates for the following license fields: Special Education PK-3 Special Education K-6 Special Education 6-12 Special Education K-12."

March 13, 2026 11:30 AM

TO: Teacher Education Committee

FROM: Robert Kai Irwin

SUBJECT: TESTIMONY

MEETING: Teachers Education Committee Meeting

AGENDA ITEM: III. E. NBI 25-32 Establish Committee to Strengthen Program Review Process

POSITION: SUPPORT

Aloha mai ke kōmike Teacher Education Committee,

My name is Robert Kai Irwin and I am Hawaiian language curriculum developer and program manager serving our network of kaiapuni schools, teachers, and ‘ohana. I am testifying in support of NBI 25-32.

It is extremely important to include individuals with kaiapuni expertise and experience on that committee to assure that the unique needs and perspectives of Hawaiian language medium education are understood, included, and addressed at every step of the committee’s work from reviewing current processes to developing recommendations. Kaiapuni expertise will help ensure that any improvements to the review process are culturally grounded, equitable, and supportive of Hawaiian language medium education, a program with widespread community support and ongoing rapid growth. Mahalo!

I respectfully ask the Committee to pass NBI 25-32 to ensure our schools have the representation they deserve in the program review process.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify,

Robert Kai Irwin

TO: March 13, 2026 11:30 AM

FROM: Faryn K. Oliver

SUBJECT: TESTIMONY

MEETING: Teachers Education Committee Meeting

AGENDA ITEM: III. E. NBI 25-32 Establish Committee to Strengthen Program Review Process

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH COMMENTS

Aloha mai ke kōmike Teacher Education Committee,

My name is Faryn “Kalei” Oliver and I am a kumu Kaiapuni (Hawaiian Language Immersion Program teacher). I am testifying in SUPPORT WITH COMMENTS of NBI 25-32.

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposal to establish a temporary committee dedicated to reviewing and recommending improvements to the HTSB program review process. I strongly urge the Board to ensure that the committee includes experts in Kaiapuni Hawaiian language medium education. This includes either teachers, leaders, educators, and other parties who have experience, expertise, and knowledge in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian language) and our Kaiapuni school systems.

Kaiapuni education operates within a unique pedagogical and linguistic framework. Without qualified representation from this sector on the committee, the "standardization" of review processes risks overlooking the specific needs, evidence requirements, and cultural competencies inherent to Hawaiian medium teacher preparation. To truly be responsive to "community concerns," the committee must include voices that understand the nuances of immersion education to ensure that the program review process is equitable and culturally grounded.

In conclusion, strengthening the program review process is an investment in the future of Hawai‘i’s teaching force. By establishing this committee and ensuring it includes diverse expertise—specifically in Kaiapuni education—the Board will foster a more inclusive, transparent, and effective system for all educator preparation programs.

I urge the Board to pass this proposal with the inclusion of Hawaiian medium education experts.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Faryn “Kalei” Oliver



[EXTERNAL] NBI 25-32 HTSB Testimony_ 03_13_26 TEC

From Pililuaikekaiohilo Keala <pkeala@hawaii.edu>

Date Wed 3/11/2026 9:40 AM

To HTSB <htsb@hawaii.gov>

TO: March 13, 2026 11:30 AM

FROM: Dr. Pililuaikekaiohilo Keala

SUBJECT: TESTIMONY

MEETING: Teachers Education Committee Meeting

AGENDA ITEM: III. E. NBI 25-32 Establish Committee to Strengthen Program Review Process

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH COMMENTS

Aloha mai ke kōmike Teacher Education Committee,

My name is Pililuaikekaiohilo Keala and I am a parent of Kaiapuni students, a previous Kaiapuni teacher, an Assistant Professor at Kawaihuelani Center for Hawaiian Language, and the Vice Chair of the ‘Aha Ho‘okō of the ‘Aha Kauleo. I am testifying in SUPPORT WITH COMMENTS of NBI 25-32.

It is pertinent that HTSB ensures that Kaiapuni perspectives as well as those with Kaiapuni expertise are included in every step of the committee’s work, from reviewing the current processes to developing recommendations. This committee of Kaiapuni experts should include individuals from various organizations and backgrounds that are invested, engaged, and highly involved in Kaiapuni education as well as Kaiapuni teacher education. These experts should include Kaiapuni educators, Kaiapuni leaders, Kaiapuni teacher preparation faculty, as well as Hawaiian language university faculty that are involved in Kaiapuni and Hawaiian language medium education. As Kaiapuni involves much more than a mainstream curriculum simply done in the Hawaiian language, these experts will ensure that not just Hawaiian language is centered in its education but also Hawaiian culture, land, and worldview in alignment with Hawai‘i’s educational standards.

Mahalo, Dr. Pililuaikekaiohilo Keala

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Pililuaikekaiohilo M.Q. Keala, EdD

Hope Polopeka (*Assistant Professor*)



Ka Hālanu ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i

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"I paʻa i kona kupuna, ʻaʻole kākou e puka"