

Testimony in Strong Support of UH West O‘ahu’s Early Childhood Education P–3 Add a Teaching Field Licensure Pathway

April 20, 2026

Aloha Chair and Members of the Board,

My name is Caroline Soga, and I am a tenured faculty member in Early Childhood Education at Honolulu Community College. My work focuses on strengthening career pathways, and supporting the early childhood workforce across Hawai‘i. I earned my Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, where my research examined how licensed teachers transitioned into pre-kindergarten (preK) classrooms and developed as early childhood educators.

I am writing in strong support of the University of Hawai‘i West O‘ahu (UHWO) Early Childhood Education (ECE) P–3 Add a Teaching Field Licensure Pathway.

More pathways are needed as Hawai‘i continues to expand public pre-kindergarten. While many preK classrooms are staffed by licensed teachers, research—including my own—demonstrates that these educators often enter the role without formal preparation in early childhood education. This is not a deficit in their teaching ability, but rather a gap in specialized knowledge related to child development, developmentally appropriate practice, and early learning pedagogy. I identified key supports necessary for their success. When provided with coursework grounded in child development, teachers reported increased confidence and were better able to implement developmentally appropriate practices. This need is directly addressed in UHWO’s pathway which includes early childhood development coursework, building a necessary foundation before candidates move into more applied learning. Teachers in my study struggled to shift from standards-driven, teacher-directed instruction to child-centered, play-based approaches. UHWO’s ECED 415: Early Childhood Curriculum and Instruction provides an opportunity for candidates to apply their new foundational knowledge to create meaningful, inquiry-based curriculum for young children. Another key finding from my research was the need for teachers to develop skills in observation and assessment of young children. UHWO pathway includes a course that focuses on observing, documenting, and assessing children’s learning directly supporting this transition. Teachers in my study described learning how to “see” children differently through observation as a transformative shift in their teaching practice.

For these reasons, I strongly support UHWO’s ECE P–3 Add a Teaching Field Licensure Pathway.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully,



Caroline Soga



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Osa Tui, Jr.
President

Logan Okita
Vice President

Cheney Kaku
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Executive Director

TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I TEACHER STANDARDS BOARD

Item: New Business Item 25-42 – Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board Executive Director Recommendation to the Board of Education

Position: Strong Opposition

Hearing: Friday, April 24, 2026, 2:45 pm

Submitter: Osa Tui, Jr., President - Hawai'i State Teachers Association

Dear members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association (HSTA) is in **strong opposition** to the proposed recommendation to reappoint Felicia Villalobos to the position of Executive Director for a new four-year term. While we acknowledge the administrative duties she has fulfilled over her current term, her executive leadership is directly tied to recent board decisions, recommendations, and policy stances that have actively restricted and negatively impacted the educator workforce in our state. As the Executive Director guiding the board's strategic direction, she bears responsibility for an approach that increasingly prioritizes restrictive barriers over flexible, supportive solutions.

We are deeply concerned with the direction the agency has taken on a number of critical issues under her leadership. First is the agency's steadfast position opposing legislative efforts that would extend the allowable time for emergency hires from three to five years. During a period of severe educator shortages across our islands, it is entirely counterproductive to oppose measures that would give dedicated and desperately needed emergency hires the necessary time to complete their licensure requirements while continuing to serve our students. It is illogical and ultimately hurts our keiki to remove these educators who are making a good faith effort to obtain their certifications in an especially financially difficult time, only to replace them with long-term substitutes.

Furthermore, we have deep concerns regarding the board's moratorium on all out-of-state Educator Preparation Providers seeking initial program approval to become a State Approved Teacher Education Program in Hawai'i. This moratorium, which began in late 2023 under her tenure and is set to remain in effect until December 31, 2026, severely restricts vital avenues for credentialing. At a time when we should be expanding every possible pathway into the teaching profession, blocking institutions that are willing to prepare future educators only exacerbates the staffing crisis in our public school system.

Additionally, for teachers making progress toward earning their certifications to teach in our Kaiapuni classrooms, the board under her direction has put up new barriers and administrative hurdles which are negatively impacting their ability to earn licensure. When the demand for Kaiapuni education is far outpacing the system's capacity, the standards board continues to act as a barrier rather than the collaborative partner they should be in the critical area of Hawaiian education.

Given the urgent need to recruit and retain teachers in Hawai'i, the state desperately needs an administrative apparatus and executive leadership at the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board that prioritizes building pathways rather than erecting roadblocks. Because the recent actions of the agency under the leadership of Felicia Villalobos have consistently sought to limit rather than expand these vital avenues for our educators, we must register our serious concern regarding this recommendation. Therefore, the HSTA respectfully urges the members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board to oppose her reappointment to this position.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

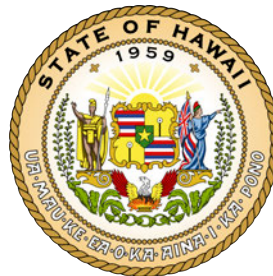


Testimony on NBI 25-42 (April 24, 2026 General Business Meeting 2:45 PM Agenda)

From Sen. Donna Mercado Kim <senkim@capitol.hawaii.gov>

Date Tue 4/21/2026 2:59 PM

To HTSB <htsb@hawaii.gov>



*From the Office of
Senator Donna Mercado Kim*

April 21, 2026

Aloha Chair and Members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on New Business Item (NBI) 25-42, relating to the proposed recommendation to the Hawai'i State Board of Education for the reappointment of Ms. Felicia Villalobos as Executive Director for a four-year term from July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2030.

I respectfully express serious concerns and opposition to proceeding with this action at this time.

This proposed reappointment is being considered at a particularly sensitive and transitional moment for the Board. The Senate has recently exercised its constitutional role by confirming four new members and one returning member to the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board, all of whom will begin their terms on July 1, 2026. These appointments reflect a deliberate effort to ensure that the Board is positioned with the appropriate composition and perspective moving forward.

However, it appears that the current Board—comprised in part of members whose nominations were not confirmed or were withdrawn—may be advancing this reappointment prior to the seating of the newly confirmed members. Taking action on a four-year executive leadership contract under these circumstances raises concerns about whether this decision may inadvertently circumvent the views and judgment of the incoming Board.

In addition, I note that legislation is actively advancing this session that would require legislative confirmation of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board Executive Director. Proceeding with a long-term reappointment at this stage could effectively preempt or undermine the intent of that measure, particularly as it relates to strengthening legislative oversight and ensuring accountability for this critical position.

Given these factors, I respectfully urge the Board to defer action on NBI 25-42 until:

- The newly confirmed Board members are seated and able to fully participate in this decision; and
- The Legislature has completed its consideration of measures that may directly impact the appointment and oversight of the Executive Director position. This approach would promote transparency, uphold the integrity of the governance process, and ensure that such a significant decision reflects the full and current composition of the Board, as well as the evolving policy framework under consideration by the Legislature.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these concerns and for your continued service to our educators and students across Hawai'i.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donna", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Donna Mercado Kim
State Senator, District 14
Chair, Senate Committee on Education



**Office of Senator
Kurt Fevella**

**Item: New Business Item 25-42 – Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board Executive Director
Recommendation to the Board of Education**

Position: Strong Opposition

Hearing: Friday, April 24, 2026, 2:45 pm

Submitter: Senator Kurt Fevella, District 20

Dear members of the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board,

I strongly oppose the recommendation to reappoint Felicia Villalobos as Executive Director of the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board for another four-year term.

Serious concerns remain about HTSB’s impact on teacher licensure and the ongoing teacher shortage. In one case, a highly qualified teacher in my district was denied licensure despite strong support from her preparation program, the Hawai‘i Department of Education, and her school principal. This rigid, non–case-by-case approach resulted in five years of emergency-hire status—without full compensation or medical benefits—despite her serving full time and as a department chair. Decisions like this undermine efforts to recruit and retain educators.

Under Villalobos’s leadership, HTSB has also opposed extending emergency-hire timelines from three to five years—an approach that would help retain teachers actively working toward licensure during a severe shortage. Removing these educators only to replace them with long-term substitutes harms students and schools.

Further, the board’s moratorium on new out-of-state educator preparation providers through 2026 restricts critical pathways into the profession at a time when expansion is urgently needed. Additional barriers affecting Kaiapuni teacher candidates similarly hinder progress in an area already facing high demand.

Hawai‘i needs leadership that expands access, removes barriers, and prioritizes practical solutions to the teacher shortage. The current direction under Villalobos has too often limited opportunities rather than strengthened them.

For these reasons, I urge opposition to her reappointment.

Mahalo,



Senator Kurt Fevella

State of Hawaii, District 20

State Capitol, Room 231
415 S. Beretania Street Honolulu,
HI 96813
Phone: (808) 586-6360 Fax:
(808) 586-6361
senfevella@capitol.hawaii.gov

Date: April 22, 2026

Subject: Opposition to NBI 25-41: The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board Executive Director's Evaluation Recommendation for 2025-2026

To the Members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board,

I am writing to formally submit testimony in opposition to NBI 25-41, which recommends a "Commendable" performance rating for Executive Director Felicia Villalobos for the 2025-2026 cycle. While the evaluation highlights certain administrative successes, there are critical areas of concern regarding the Director's leadership and its impact on the educator community that warrant a reconsideration of this rating.

The current approach to program oversight has shifted from a partnership to a more adversarial relationship. This change is hurting the very institutions that train our teachers. Many EPP leaders feel their expertise is being dismissed or undervalued, creating a divide between the programs and the Board. More concerning is that many stakeholders are now hesitant to speak up about these issues. There is a growing fear that voicing a grievance regarding the Executive Director's leadership will result in professional retaliation, leading to a culture where people are afraid to provide honest feedback.

The Executive Director's advocacy for "high standards" and "accountability" has been used to create unnecessary barriers, thereby obstructing the mission of increasing the number of qualified teachers in Hawai'i. There is significant concern that the current decision-making strategies do not align with the goal of facilitating reasonable licensure pathways. For potential teachers, this rigid interpretation of rules has led to the denial of licenses and requirements to redo coursework, resulting in undue financial hardship and emotional stress during an already critical teacher shortage.

A major professional concern is the tendency to change rules or interpretations mid-semester without a clear implementation plan. This lack of transparency and predictability undermines the stability that EPPs and teacher candidates require to succeed.

While maintaining high standards is essential, it should not come at the cost of a collaborative culture or the creation of unnecessary obstacles for those entering the profession. For these reasons, I respectfully oppose the "Commendable" rating and urge the Board to address these issues.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Hope Pualani McKeen

April 21, 2026

To: Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board

From: Francine Medeiros, Program Director, Institute for Native Pacific Education and Culture (INPEACE)

Re: Testimony in Support of NBI 25-48

Position: Support

Meetings:

April 24, 2026 HTSB Teacher Education Committee Meeting, Agenda Item III H (NBI 25-48 Consideration of iteach-Hawai'i Letter of Intent to Plan Initial License and Add a Teaching Field Programs in Early Childhood Education)

April 24, 2026 HTSB General Business Meeting, Agenda Item VI X (NBI 25-48 Consideration of iteach-Hawai'i Letter of Intent to Plan Initial License and Add a Teaching Field Programs in Early Childhood Education)

Aloha Chair and Members of the Board,

The Institute for Native Pacific Education and Culture (INPEACE) supports NBI 25-48 and the proposed development of early childhood education licensure pathways by iteach Hawai'i.

INPEACE's work to strengthen Native Hawaiian communities through education includes a strong focus on early learning, workforce development, and building pathways for local residents to enter and advance in education careers. Expanding accessible routes to teacher licensure—especially in early childhood—aligns with that mission.

Hawai'i's continued expansion of preschool access has increased the need for qualified early childhood educators, and additional pathways are needed to meet that demand. The proposed programs create a flexible pathway for individuals already working in early learning and childcare settings to become licensed teachers, while also supporting current teachers in adding an early childhood field.

Increasing the number of licensed early childhood educators supports not only schools, but also the broader network of community-based early learning programs serving Hawai'i's children and families.

For these reasons, INPEACE respectfully urges the Board to approve NBI 25-48.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Francine Medeiros, Ka Lama Education Academy, Program Director
Institute for Native Pacific Education and Culture (INPEACE)

TO: Hawaii Teacher Standards Board
650 Iwilei Road, Suite 268
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

FROM: Stephanie Furuta
Program Chair of Graduate & Non-Licensure Programs
School of Teacher Education, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SUBJECT: General Business Meeting
Agenda Item VI.F: NBI 25-41 The Hawaii Teacher Standards Board Executive
Director's Evaluation Recommendation for 2025-2026
Agenda Item VI.F: NBI 25-42 The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board Executive
Director Recommendation to the Board of Education

POSITION: Oppose

Aloha Chair Miyamae, Vice Chair Ozaki, and Members of the Hawai'i Teachers Standards Board,

My name is Stephanie Furuta, and I am the Program Chair of Graduate & Non-Licensure Programs in the School of Teacher Education (STE) at UH-Mānoa's College of Education.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in **opposition** of NBI 25-41, which approves an overall commendable evaluation of Executive Director Felicia Villalobos, and NBI 25-42, which recommends the reappointment of the Executive Director.

The Executive Director's evaluation was informed by data gathered from Board members, HTSB staff, and the Executive Director herself. However, critical stakeholders, particularly educator preparation programs and community partners who work closely with HTSB, were not provided a meaningful opportunity to contribute feedback or inform the evaluation process. Inclusion of these perspectives would likely have resulted in a more comprehensive and balanced assessment.

Over time, it has become increasingly difficult to collaborate effectively with the Executive Director and the HTSB. The following concerns, among others, have contributed to growing frustration and a perception of gatekeeping in teacher preparation efforts, stemming from both organizational practices and leadership approach:

- Communication from the Executive Director is often unclear, inconsistent, and not sufficiently responsive to time sensitive program needs.
- Messaging and guidance from the Executive Director have at times been inconsistent, leading to confusion among stakeholders and undermining confidence in decision-making processes.

- There is a lack of transparency in the program review process, including unclear expectations, shifting criteria, and limited opportunities for dialogue or clarification.
- Interactions with leadership have, at times, fostered an adversarial rather than collaborative environment, contributing to a culture of fear and hesitation instead of one grounded in shared responsibility and partnership.
- Teacher candidates are adversely impacted, both financially and professionally, when they are unable to secure licensure in critical shortage areas, such as kaiapuni education, due to inefficient, ineffective, and unnecessarily cumbersome review processes.

Collectively, these issues hinder progress toward our shared goal of strengthening Hawai‘i’s educator workforce and addressing persistent teacher shortages. A transparent, consistent, and collaborative leader is essential to ensuring that HTSB can effectively support educator preparation programs and the candidates they serve. I do not support Executive Director Villalobos’ evaluation rating, or her reappointment from July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2030.

Thank you for your attention to this important personnel matter and for your continued commitment to strengthening Hawai‘i’s public education system.

April 21, 2026

To: Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board

From: Francine Medeiros, Program Director, Institute for Native Pacific Education and Culture (INPEACE)

Re: Testimony in Support of NBI 25-28

Position: Support

Meetings:

April 24, 2026 HTSB Teacher Education Committee Meeting, Agenda Item III A (NBI 25-28 Consideration of UHWO's ECED Add a Teaching Field Licensure Pathway (P-3) for in -service teachers who currently hold a teaching license and with to add Pre-K to their teaching license.)

April 24, 2026 HTSB General Business Meeting, Agenda Item III.A (NBI 25-28 Consideration of UHWO's ECED Add a Teaching Field Licensure Pathway (P-3) for in -service teachers who currently hold a teaching license and with to add Pre-K to their teaching license.)

Aloha Chair and Members of the Board,

The Institute for Native Pacific Education and Culture (INPEACE) supports NBI 25-28 and the proposed development of early childhood education licensure pathways by iteach Hawai'i.

INPEACE's work to strengthen Native Hawaiian communities through education includes a strong focus on early learning, workforce development, and building pathways for local residents to enter and advance in education careers. Expanding accessible routes to teacher licensure—especially in early childhood—aligns with that mission.

Hawai'i's continued expansion of preschool access has increased the need for qualified early childhood educators, and additional pathways are needed to meet that demand. The proposed programs create a flexible pathway for individuals already working in early learning and childcare settings to become licensed teachers, while also supporting current teachers in adding an early childhood field.

Increasing the number of licensed early childhood educators supports not only schools, but also the broader network of community-based early learning programs serving Hawai'i's children and families.

For these reasons, INPEACE respectfully urges the Board to approve NBI 25-28.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Francine Medeiros, Ka Lama Education Academy, Program Director
Institute for Native Pacific Education and Culture (INPEACE)




UNIVERSITY
of HAWAII®
WEST O'AHU

Office of the Chancellor

April 21, 2026

TO: Hawai'i Teachers Standards Board

FROM: Carlos Peñaloza 
Interim Chancellor, University of Hawai'i West O'ahu

SUBJECT: Testimony in Support of NBI 25-28: UHWO's ECED P-3 Add a Teaching Field Pathway

Aloha Chair and Members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board,

I am writing in strong support of New Business Item (NBI) 25-28, the University of Hawai'i–West O'ahu's Early Childhood Education (ECED) P–3 Add a Teaching Field Licensure Pathway. This proposal represents a timely and strategic response to Hawai'i's ongoing shortage of qualified early childhood educators. Expanding opportunities for currently licensed teachers to add a teaching field in Early Childhood Education provides an efficient and high-impact approach to strengthening the educator workforce while supporting the State's efforts to expand access to high-quality early learning.

The UHWO ECED program is uniquely positioned to contribute to this effort. As an indigenous-serving institution, UH West O'ahu is grounded in a mission that embraces Native Hawaiian culture and values while fostering student success across diverse communities. The ECED program reflects this commitment through culturally sustaining and revitalizing approaches to early childhood education. Preparing educators through this lens is critical to ensuring that teaching and learning are relevant, responsive, and rooted in the communities they serve. In addition, UHWO's program structure and reach allow it to serve candidates across Hawai'i, including rural and underserved areas. This access is essential to building a more equitable, community-based educator pipeline and addressing workforce needs across the state, not only in urban centers.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board to approve NBI 25-28. This pathway will play an important role in expanding and strengthening Hawai'i's early childhood educator workforce and supporting positive outcomes for our keiki.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

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[EXTERNAL] Testimony for NBI 25-32

From Aaron J Levine <alevine@hawaii.edu>

Date Wed 4/22/2026 10:52 AM

To HTSB <htsb@hawaii.gov>

TO: Hawaii Teacher Standards Board
General Business Meeting
650 Iwilei Road, Suite 268
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

FROM: Aaron Levine
Partnership and Placement Coordinator
School of Teacher Education, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SUBJECT: Teacher Education Committee Meeting
Testimony - Item E, NBI 25-32 Establish Committee to Strengthen Program Review Process

POSITION: Support

Aloha Chair Miyamae, Vice Chair Ozaki, and Members of the Hawai'i Teachers Standards Board,

My name is Aaron Levine. I am a teacher educator in the School of Teacher Education at the College of Education, UH Manoa.

I strongly support *NBI 25-32, Establish Committee to Strengthen Program Review Process*. Establishing a committee to improve the program review process would honor the expertise of preparation programs, HIDOE, and other stakeholder groups and promote a more collaborative environment between HTSB and stakeholders. Improvements to the current program review process are necessary to ultimately allow for more timely reviews that work to deliver quality preparation programs and support P-12 student success.

Mahalo for volunteering your time to HTSB and for your commitment to teacher quality.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

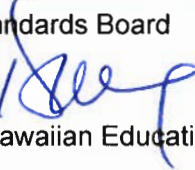


KEITH T. HAYASHI
SUPERINTENDENT

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

OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN EDUCATION
April 20, 2026

TO: Members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board
Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board

FROM: Dawn Kau'i Sang 
Director, Office of Hawaiian Education, Hawai'i Department of Education

SUBJECT: Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board, General Business Meeting
Agenda Item VI. N. NBI 25-22 Revised- Policy on Hawaiian Permit Requirements,
Program Responsibilities, and Review

Aloha Members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board:

The Hawai'i Department of Education (Department) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on **Agenda Item VI. N. New Business Item (NBI) 25-22 Revised Policy on Hawaiian Permit Requirements, Program Responsibilities, and Review**. We support the recommendations of the HTSB Hawaiian Work Group during its most recent meeting on February 12, 2026. This revised draft reflects the shared understanding of this work group and is a confirmation of value for ensuring strong collaboration between those parties who have the most appropriate experience in responding to the needs of Ka Papahana Kaiapuni schools and classrooms.

The Department values efforts such as these in order to increase appropriate support for the faculty, staff, and students who have dedicated themselves to Kaiapuni education and Hawaiian language revitalization. Furthermore, we view the Hawaiian Permit as a vital tool for filling vacancies in our Kaiapuni schools. It provides a meaningful pathway for educators to serve our communities while they concurrently pursue degrees or teacher certifications.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of NBI 25-22 Revised. Should you have any further questions, please contact me by email at, dawn.sang@k12.hi.us.

DKS:lh

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

TO: Hawaii Teacher Standards Board
General Business Meeting
650 Iwilei Road, Suite 268
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

FROM: Jon Yoshioka
Professor and Chair, School of Teacher Education
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Lori Fulton
Professor and Associate Chair, School of Teacher Education
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SUBJECT: Testimony - Teacher Education Committee and General Business Meeting
Teacher Education Committee
III. E. [NBI 25-32](#) Establish Committee to Strengthen Program Review Process
General Business Meeting
VI. U. [NBI 25-32](#) Establish Committee to Strengthen Program Review Process

Aloha mai kākou,

Our names are Jon Yoshioka and Lori Fulton. We are Professors and the Chair and Associate Chair in the School of Teacher Education (STE) at the College of Education (COE), University of Hawaii at Mānoa (UH Mānoa). We each have over 30 years of teaching experience, at the elementary, secondary, and higher educational levels, as well as both public and private schools. We would like to thank the Board members for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of NBI 25-32 Establish Committee to Strengthen Program Review Process.

Our colleagues in the STE and we agree with the mission and vision of HTSB to ensure that the Hawai'i public education system is rigorous and fosters student success. As members of the oldest and largest teacher preparation program in the State of Hawai'i it has always been and continues to be our goal to ensure that classrooms have highly qualified, professional teachers. At the COE we are professional educators, well aware of the Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) and the work required to ensure we are meeting these within our existing programs, as well as new and modified programs that we propose. When requesting changes to existing programs or proposing new programs, the STE must first work with UH Mānoa to go through a rigorous review and approval process, which may take a year or more. Upon approval, we are then required by HTSB to submit these documents to them for approval. Unfortunately, this lengthy HTSB process contains many redundancies previously addressed in the UH Mānoa review and/or in our AAQEP Accreditation review. Ultimately, HTSB's requirement to submit documents we have already received approval for through UH Mānoa significantly hinders our ability to support the State's workforce needs of quickly and efficiently ensuring highly qualified teachers in every classroom.

When submitting applications to HTSB, the UH Mānoa STE has consistently experienced a myriad of challenges with HTSB's review process. We offer two examples:

1. **Delay in processing requests, unreasonable time frames, and effect on students -**
There are multiple instances of the STE submitting items to HTSB for review that have sat with them for months. But HTSB asks us to provide copious amounts of feedback on questions they come up with in three days or risk not being able to be part of that month's meeting agenda. These delays have resulted in the STE not being able to offer programs in teacher shortage areas like Hawaiian Language Immersion (HLI), Multilingual Learners (MLL), and Special Education (SPED).
2. **Inaccuracies on New Business Items -** Process and program changes are put forward as New Business Items; which to our knowledge are developed by HTSB and released one week prior to the meeting. The New Business Items are created independently, without consultation or collaboration with potentially affected stakeholders, which has led to inaccuracies. While Educator Preparation Programs are able to provide testimony on those NBIs, our experience has not been a positive one. The STE's written and oral testimony were not addressed and the HTSB Board approved the NBIs without dealing with the inaccurate information or considering a deferral for stakeholders to better understand what the NBI entailed. In fact, when asked, one of Executive Director Villalobos' staff stated that HTSB does not need to collaborate or seek input from Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) and can make unilateral decisions without consultation. As shocking as this statement was, Executive Director Villalobos did not attempt to correct it, which would lead those in attendance to believe that it accurately represents the current mindset and culture of HTSB.

Some questions we would like to pose:

- What guides HTSB's review process to standardize reviews?
- What standards do they use?
- How are the review committees guided in this process (e.g., what guidelines are provided that align with the purpose for HTSB reviews, how are the groups facilitated to ensure objective and clear reviews)?

We thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony and we support the establishment of a committee to recommend improvements to the HTSB program review process to enhance transparency, consistency, and responsiveness to community concerns. However, we strongly encourage that the committee have representation from Educator Preparation Programs as well as other key stakeholders from the community. In order to meet the needs of the State, we would like to work with HTSB to try to build a collaborative process between Educator Preparation Programs and the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board that allows us to recruit, graduate, and retain highly qualified and professional teachers. We would be happy to talk further about our experiences and/or aspects of the review process that could support these goals. Please feel free to contact us at the UH Mānoa COE.

Mahalo nui for providing us this time and for the work you do for education in Hawaii.

TO: Hawaii Teacher Standards Board
General Business Meeting
650 Iwilei Road, Suite 268
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

FROM: Jon Yoshioka
Professor and Chair, School of Teacher Education
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Lori Fulton
Professor and Associate Chair, School of Teacher Education
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SUBJECT: Testimony - General Business Meeting
VI. F. NBI 25-41 The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board Executive Director's
Evaluation Recommendation for 2025-2026

Aloha mai kākou,

Our names are Jon Yoshioka and Lori Fulton. We are Professors and the Chair and Associate Chair in the School of Teacher Education (STE) at the College of Education (COE), University of Hawaii at Mānoa (UH Mānoa). We each have over 30 years of teaching experience, at the elementary, secondary, and higher educational levels, as well as both public and private schools. We would like to thank the Board members for the opportunity to provide testimony on the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) Executive Director's Evaluation Recommendation for 2025-2026.

As with any organization, the HTSB is a reflection of its leadership, and the Executive Director sets the overall tone and direction. We are writing to share our experiences working with the HTSB. Our feedback will be related to the areas of Leadership, Communication, Professionalism, and Administrative Responsibilities.

Leadership. One component of good leadership is the ability to bring multiple stakeholders together to work toward a common goal. This, unfortunately, was not the case when we were invited to engage in conversations with Executive Director Villalobos about the Teacher Apprenticeship Effort. Executive Director Villalobos deserves credit for receiving the funding for the Teacher Apprenticeship Effort, however, to our knowledge this program has not yet been implemented. While it is not clear why the program was not able to move forward, as individuals who work with teacher candidates and mentors on a daily basis, we were invited to join the discussion about what the program would entail only after the funding was in place and it seemed as though key ideas were already set and not up for debate or discussion. Stakeholder collaboration is stated as a component of leadership; ideally, engaging and truly collaborating with stakeholders earlier on may have led to greater success with this effort.

Communication. We provided both written and oral testimony in the past on NBIs to address inaccurate information and/or request deferral to allow for consultation. While we recognize that Executive Director Villalobos does not run the Board meetings, the way that Board meetings are set up and much of how the overall process functions are a direct reflection of the Executive Director's overall vision for HTSB. The written and oral testimony we provided were not addressed and the HTSB Board approved the NBIs without dealing with the inaccurate information or considering a deferral for stakeholders to better understand what the NBI entailed. In fact, when asked, one of Executive Director Villalobos' staff stated that HTSB does not need to collaborate or seek input from Educator Preparation Programs (EPP) and can make unilateral decisions without consultation. As shocking as this statement was, Executive Director Villalobos did not attempt to correct it, which would lead those in attendance to believe that it accurately represents the current mindset and culture of HTSB. We do not believe this type of practice reflects an inclusive communication style and it creates the perception that the outcome of the decisions made during HTSB Board meetings are already predetermined.

Professionalism. Within the STE there are multiple examples where Executive Director Villalobos and/or members of HTSB have met with faculty to discuss program modifications, concerns, NBIs, or various other issues. In these situations, we have consistently experienced HTSB's lack of professionalism and integrity and as a result have learned it is essential to get everything in writing at the time of the meeting, as verbal feedback during those meetings often differs from the written feedback that is received after we have submitted the required documents. This consistently inconsistent way of doing business does not provide a clear sense of purpose as part of professionalism. Furthermore, this standard calls for consistently modeling professionalism and integrity in all interactions. This would include how feedback is received and reflected on. In our experience, there is significant defensiveness and/or deflection whenever any kind of well intentioned feedback is given. One example occurred when HTSB received constructive feedback via testimony regarding program review policy, but Executive Director Villalobos used that information to call out EPPs for what they were not doing instead of looking for constructive ways of working together toward what should be common goals.

Administrative Responsibilities. While it is important that the Executive Director uphold rigorous standards for public record-keeping and data integrity, there is a difference between appropriate levels of rigor versus significant micromanagement and overreach. The HTSB's requests often fall into the inefficient and unnecessary category. Examples include, but are not limited to, HTSB requesting EPPs ask mentor teachers to take screen shots of their credentials that are already on record or questioning readings within a syllabus or the format in which a course is offered to students. Such requests put the STE's carefully crafted and curated partnerships in jeopardy, and add "busy work" to already overworked faculty who could better use their time to mentor and teach teacher candidates. Questions related to readings and syllabi, while they may be well intentioned, demonstrate an overreach that draws into question the credentials and expertise of teacher education faculty.

For these reasons, we do not support NBI 25-41.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Mahalo nui for providing us this time and for the work you do for education in Hawaii.

TO: Hawaii Teacher Standards Board
General Business Meeting
650 Iwilei Road, Suite 268
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

FROM: Jon Yoshioka
Professor and Chair, School of Teacher Education
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Lori Fulton
Professor and Associate Chair, School of Teacher Education
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SUBJECT: Testimony - General Business Meeting
VI. G. NBI 25-42 The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board Executive Director
Recommendation to the Board of Education

Aloha mai kākou,

Our names are Jon Yoshioka and Lori Fulton. We are Professors and the Chair and Associate Chair in the School of Teacher Education (STE) at the College of Education (COE), University of Hawaii at Mānoa (UH Mānoa). We each have over 30 years of teaching experience, at the elementary, secondary, and higher educational levels, as well as in both public and private schools. We would like to thank the Board members for the opportunity to provide testimony on the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) Executive Director Recommendation to the Board of Education.

As with any organization, the HTSB is a reflection of its leadership, and the Executive Director sets the overall tone and direction. We are writing to share our experiences working with the HTSB. Our feedback will be related to the areas of Leadership, Communication, Professionalism, and Administrative Responsibilities.

Leadership. One component of good leadership is the ability to bring multiple stakeholders together to work toward a common goal. This, unfortunately, was not the case when we were invited to engage in conversations with Executive Director Villalobos about the Teacher Apprenticeship Effort. Executive Director Villalobos deserves credit for receiving the funding for the Teacher Apprenticeship Effort, however, to our knowledge this program has not yet been implemented. While it is not clear why the program was not able to move forward, as individuals who work with teacher candidates and mentors on a daily basis, we were invited to join the discussion about what the program would entail only after the funding was in place and it seemed as though key ideas were already set and not up for debate or discussion. Stakeholder collaboration is stated as a component of leadership; ideally, engaging and truly collaborating with stakeholders earlier on may have led to greater success with this effort.

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Overall, the limited examples we were able to provide in this time and space, give insight into a much larger issue. The uncollaborative and unprofessional environment that Executive Director

Villalobos and HTSB have created is one in which faculty do not want to put forward new programs or make changes to existing programs that would require a review by HTSB. This is a significant challenge at a time when the State of Hawai'i is facing teacher shortages, forcing an increase in the number of emergency hires. It is essential that HTSB Leadership and those at all levels of HTSB be able to work collaboratively with EPPs and other stakeholders across the state to not only make sure that we have high quality teachers in the classroom but also work toward fulfilling the needs of the state by reducing rather than creating barriers under the guise of upholding rigorous standards.

For these reasons, we oppose NBI 25-42.

Mahalo nui for giving us the opportunity to provide this testimony and for the work you do for education in Hawaii.

Senator Michelle N. Kidani
Vice President of the Senate



Vice Chair
Education

Member
Ways and Means

The Senate
Ka 'Aha Kenekoa

STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

April 22, 2026

Aloha Chair and Members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board,

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding New Business Item 25-42, regarding the recommendation to the Hawai'i State Board of Education for the reappointment of Ms. Felicia Villalobos as Executive Director for a four-year term beginning July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2030.

As Senate Vice President and Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Education, I respectfully raise concerns and opposition with moving forward on this matter at this time.

This item comes before the Board during an important period of transition. The Senate recently fulfilled its constitutional responsibility by confirming four new members and one returning member to the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board, all of whom are scheduled to begin service on July 1, 2026. These appointments were made to help ensure the Board moves ahead with a composition that reflects collaboration with key stakeholders.

Given that timeline, it is concerning that a significant personnel decision involving a multi-year leadership contract may be considered before those newly confirmed members have the opportunity to participate. Advancing such action prior to the seating of incoming members may limit the ability of the full, duly constituted Board to weigh in on a decision of lasting consequence.

Further, the Legislature is actively considering measures this session relating to legislative confirmation of the Executive Director position. Proceeding now with a long-term reappointment potentially undercuts the purpose of those proposals, which seek to strengthen oversight, accountability, and public confidence in the governance of this important role.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that action on NBI 25-42 be postponed until:

1. The newly confirmed Board members have officially assumed their seats and are able to participate fully in deliberations; and
2. The Legislature has concluded its review of measures that may directly impact the appointment and oversight of the Executive Director position.

Allowing additional time would support a transparent process, preserve institutional integrity, and help ensure that any final decision reflects both the full membership of the Board and the policy direction currently under consideration by the Legislature.

April 22, 2026
Page 2 of 2

Thank you for your consideration and your service to Hawai'i's educators, students, and families.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle N. Kidani". The signature is written in a cursive style with a dot over the 'i' in "Kidani".

Michelle N. Kidani, Vice President
Hawaii State Senate



[EXTERNAL] Testimony NBI 25-41

From Christina Keaulana <ctk8@hawaii.edu>

Date Wed 4/22/2026 12:50 PM

To HTSB <htsb@hawaii.gov>

Testimony

Name: Christina Keaulana, PhD

Position: Special Education Coordinator

Organization: Leeward Community College

Meeting: April 24, 2026

Agenda item: NBI 25-41 HTSB Executive Director's Evaluation Rec for 2025-2026

Position: Oppose with comment

As the Leeward CC Special Education Coordinator, I oppose the performance rating of "commendable" for HTSB's Executive Director Felicia Villalobos for the period of July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026 citing subpar performance in the standards outlined in NBI 25-41 as the basis for evaluation of competency.

Executive Director (ED)Villalobos has failed to facilitate the review process for new programs in an organized, timely and transparent manner. There were extreme delays in response time, assembling of review committees, and review of program proposals in addition to inaccuracies and vague generalized disapproval statements in the review commentary which brings into question the integrity of the review process under the direction of ED Villalobos. I even venture to question whether the exhaustive amount of content-specific information, assessment descriptions, alignment crosswalk tables, and response commentary were actually reviewed at all since the descriptions, links and evidence all specifically addressed/answered the questions raised in the commentary. As someone who serves as a lead on quality assurances for our college accreditation through ACCJC and our Teacher Education Program's national accreditation through AAQEP, the review process facilitated by ED Villalobos was highly disorganized, biased, and prolonged. The program approval process has been under so much scrutiny by the EPP community, that during the January 8, 2026 Board of Education meeting, it was suggested that an audit be conducted to address the handling of program reviews by HTSB. Testimony from UHM's Assessment Specialist, our Kaiapuni preparation programs, UHWO, UHM's SPED faculty and more raise serious concerns about how HTSB has handled program reviews. Ultimately, the individuals who lose in such bureaucratic delays are the children we are charged with serving. As we increase the number of public preschool classrooms to nearly 100 statewide, it is important to note that [priority enrollment](#) is designated for students who qualify for special education services and students from low income families, therefore, our state is in dire need of culturally responsive preparation programs in this area.

The role of the committee and HTSB is to establish and corroborate alignment of a preparation program with the Hawai'i Teacher Performance Standards. Per HAR §302A-805.5 HTSB's primary role is "Approval of teacher education programs; professional development of teachers. The board shall be responsible for approving teacher education programs that meet the standards established by the board." Content and grade-level expertise and curriculum design are subject to review by institutional curriculum committee review and national accreditation bodies. The qualifications for hire by an IHE are extremely rigorous and faculty deemed qualified to design and deliver content-specific curriculum meet the highest standards of academic qualifications and industry-related experience. Leeward CC is accredited by ACCJC and our TEP is accredited by AAQEP. These bodies have comprehensive and OBJECTIVE methods for quality assurance, including curriculum. As an IHE, we undergo exhaustive curriculum committee review, 5-year reviews, Anthology course

learning outcome evaluations, and faculty hiring processes are very rigorous to ensure MQs, DQs ,etc. are met or exceeded prior to hire. All faculty have kuleana to provide a dossier showing how we ensure courses are aligned with current relevant industry standards, that courses are adapted, updated, and improved. We house an Online Innovation Center dedicated to supporting instructor training in distance education, including Quality Matters Training to ensure DE courses are engaging, interactive, and address AI. Conversely, there are no minimum qualifications or desired qualifications for the HTSB review committee. Quite frankly, the curriculum designed for the Leeward CC SPED PK-3 program was a culmination of effort from powerhouses in the ECE SPED community who surpass the foundational and practical knowledge of the assembled committee or HTSB board members in the field of early childhood special education. The curriculum team is an assembly of the cream of the crop of early childhood special educators in the state of Hawai'i and beyond. This group of individuals are dedicated to serving on a 4 year OSEP grant composed of 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](#).

I should mention, the process for program approvals under the direction of previous HTSB Executive Directors was clearly communicated. On the contrary, the response to our inquiry about a timeline for review, Executive Director Villalobos's response was, "*Since each program review is different, I am unable to give you a specific timeline. The review timeline will be up to the Review Team and their questions and/or the additional information/clarification they may request from LCC.*" Prior to Executive Director Villalobos' appointment, the program review procedures were consistent, clearly outlined and collaborative. After approval of authorization to plan a new program, EPPs have one year to submit the HTSB program approval template. By that time, HTSB would assemble a committee to review the program. The EPP would receive the names and qualifications (bio) of each committee member and HTSB would seek approval of the committee members from the EPP deeming the committee members credible. After approval of the committee, they would have 4 weeks to review and provide feedback and then 2 weeks later (or the next upcoming Board meeting, whichever arrived sooner) the NBI would be voted upon based on the recommendation of the Review Committee and recommendation responses of the EPP proposing the new program. HTSB did NOT request EPP approval of the Review Committee and HTSB did NOT assemble a Review Committee until 3 months after HTSB received the Program Approval Template following approval of [NBI 21-05 Revised](#) and [NBI 21-10 Revised](#). Furthermore, the review committee included partisan members, leaning on a HTSB board member without ECE background, the SPED ECE coordinator at UHM (the only SPED ECE licensure pathway in the state) and an elementary math specialist who finished her graduate degree at UHM degree during this review process, whose specialization and background is math and not ECE. Their duty as a review committee was to determine if the program aligns with the teacher performance standards set by the Board, not to interpret curriculum. Incidentally after the first review, the UHM Teacher Recruitment Specialist recused herself from serving on the committee.

Leeward CC has been in the process of adding SPED PK-3 as a field to the Advanced Professional Certificate in SPED since September 2021. Below is an outline of the extremely convoluted process we have undergone for adding a grade level to a SATEP through HTSB.

Key Concerns:

1. REVIEW TIMELINE:

After the Program Review was submitted to HTSB on 9/1/2024, it took 12 weeks for a HTSB Program Review Team to provide feedback (11/24/24). In less than 2 weeks LCC provided a comprehensive response addressing each concern in extensive detail. It took HTSB another 3 months to complete a second review after which they provided LCC with a "Faculty Response Portrait" on 2/27/25. LCC designed 3 new courses in ECE SPED and provided another consolidated narrative addressing each recommendation in NBI 21-10 and summarizing key program revisions on 11/18/25. After 4 months without a response from HTSB, we were asked a Praxis-related inquiry and I requested a follow up on the status

of our response to the committee’s feedback. We were provided with [NBI 25-29](#) on 3/8/2026 citing the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) does not recommend provisional program approval for Leeward Community College’s (LCC) Special Education (SPED) P-3 Initial Licensure program.

See Testimony Opposing [NBI 25-29](#).

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

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.

NEW COURSE: [Field Practicum: Special Education PK-3](#) (450 hours SPED field hours in PK-3) [EC/PK-3 SPED Observation Tool](#) – A streamlined, developmentally appropriate evaluation tool aligned to CEC EC/ECSE standards and Hawai‘i’s early learning frameworks.

Prior to the development of these three brand new ECE SPED courses, Leeward CC also redesigned all 5 core SPED methodology courses to include early childhood SPED content, which was provided to HTSB in September 2023 after a two-year process of designing and piloting the content that began in Fall 2021. The new SPED ECE curriculum for those 5 SPED methods courses is linked here again for your reference:

Content Standards Matrix	
<u>Sheet Descriptor: This sheet is to provide content standards required by HTSB.</u>	
Program Name	Content Standards
Advanced Professional Certificate in	<u>Early Intervention (EI) / Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Standards</u>

Special Education PreK-3																												
Courses and Assessments	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.2	2.3	3.1	3.2	3.3	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	5.1	5.2	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.5	6.6	6.7	7.1	7.2	7.3	7.4	
ED 330: Special Education Law and Individualized Education Program Development - Key Assessment: IEP Referral Process and Evaluation Determination	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	
ED 331: Special Education Assessment - Key Assessment: Assessing a Young Child's Development and Developing Goals	x	x	x	x							x	x	x	x	x	x											x	
ED 332: English Language Arts Instruction and Interventions - Key Assessment: Pre-Reading Activities	x														x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	
ED 332: English Language Arts Instruction and Interventions -	x	x	x	x											x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	

and Early Learning	1.2 Candidates apply knowledge of normative sequences of early development, individual differences, and families' social, cultural, and linguistic diversity to support each child's development and learning across contexts.
	1.3 Candidates apply knowledge of biological and environmental factors that may support or constrain children's early development and learning as they plan and implement early intervention and instruction.
	1.4 Candidates demonstrate an understanding of characteristics, etiologies, and individual differences within and across the range of abilities, including developmental delays and disabilities, their potential impact on children's early development and learning, and implications for assessment, curriculum, instruction, and intervention.
Standard 2: Partnering with Families	2.1 Candidates apply their knowledge of family-centered practices, family systems theory, and the changing needs and priorities in families' lives to develop trusting, respectful, affirming, and culturally responsive partnerships with all families that allow for the mutual exchange of knowledge and information.
	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.
	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.
Standard 3: Collaboration and Teaming	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.
	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.
	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.
Standard 4: Assessment Processes	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.
	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.
	4.3 Candidates analyze, interpret, document, and share assessment information using a strengths-based approach with families and other professionals.
	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>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>
	<p>7.2 Candidates engage in ongoing reflective practice and access evidence-based information to improve their own practices.</p>
	<p>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.</p>
	<p>7.4 Candidates practice within ethical and legal policies and procedures. Field and Clinical Experience Standard.</p>
<p>Standard 8: Field and Clinical Experience</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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 for 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 revised curriculum embedded in 5 existing core methodology courses linked:

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 prolonged and redundant review processes as well as vague or unsubstantiated kickback we have experienced during the HTSB review process appears to be an abuse and overreach of authority. As referenced earlier, Institutions of Higher Education such as Leeward CC 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- a 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’s 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."

Conclusion:

I wholeheartedly love being part of the education community in Hawai'i, I have served on TECC for over a decade, I have been a longstanding member of the Teacher Education Advisory Board for UHWO; I am part of the UH systemwide Education Convenings to work towards more streamlined articulations across campuses. I love collaborating with my colleagues in every sector. I have piloted new programs with HIDOE from the ground up; I have written grants for HSTA to develop new PD for teachers; when HIDOE needed RBTs for children with ASD, we developed the training credential course; when the state needed more sheltered instruction courses, we designed two new ELL courses. When UHM's [REDACTED] asks for help with any initiatives I have answered the call: I volunteered to coordinate and host the "It's Great to Be a Teacher" event; I have judged at the ED Rising competition. Anytime HTSB has asked for volunteers to join workforce committees I have volunteered my time – I was part of the Alternative Pathways Workgroup, I was part of the Hawaiian language, History and Culture Workgroup, and I recently volunteered to be part of the Mentor/Cooperating Teacher Workgroup. I am inspired on a daily basis by our collective impact as leaders in education. We collaborate with our hearts, we create with passion, and we all care deeply about serving the children across Hawai'i, with a special focus on areas identified as high need such as special education and early childhood education. If I can be candid, the only entity I have not felt a spirit of collaboration and collegiality with is with the current leadership of the Hawai'i Teachers Standards Board. The dynamic should be supportive, mutually respectful, and we should always feel as though we are working towards shared visions. Instead, many of us in the EPP community question the overreach of authority and the current relationship between EPPs and HTSB feels more combative and punitive than anything. HAR 302A -805.5 and 6 define HTSB's role: to approve SATEPs; participate in efforts related to teacher quality such as PD and conducting research.

As a side note, both our children have attended or are currently attending public school in the Leeward and Central district of O'ahu, the same community we focus on for teacher preparation at Leeward CC. My son's 3rd grade teacher, Ms. [REDACTED] is an alumnus of LCC's teacher education program and is in the same hula halau as our kids. My other son's middle school counselor is an alumnus of LCC's teacher education program. She attended my online and in person courses and I sat with her multiple times advising her on how to advocate for her little brother in IEP meetings. I am vested in producing teachers who will lead classrooms of my own children, my nieces, my nephews and grandchildren to come. I do not appreciate ED Villalobos' repeated *opinions* degrading the integrity of online asynchronous delivery formats as they are not appropriate. For over three years, at least once a week, I missed dinner and quality time with my infant and toddler to pursue my PhD in Education. I pumped breastmilk for my new newborn in a Wist Hall bathroom stall instead of holding my baby to feed him. Distance education and asynchronous learning opens access to so many non-traditional students with conflicting responsibilities such as work, family (i.e., caring for children or elderly parents). I

believe ED Villalobos lacks objective, open-minded and forward-thinking leadership and would not deem her performance as Executive Director for HTSB as “commendable.”



Christina Keaulana, Ph.D.
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E hāhai i ke ala o ka hana pa'akīkī.
Pursue the path of challenging work.



[EXTERNAL] Testimony NBI 25-42

From Christina Keaulana <ctk8@hawaii.edu>

Date Wed 4/22/2026 12:56 PM

To HTSB <htsb@hawaii.gov>

Testimony

Name: Christina Keaulana, PhD

Position: Special Education Coordinator

Organization: Leeward Community College

Meeting: April 24, 2026

Agenda item: NBI 25-42 Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board Executive Director Recommendation to the Board of Education

Position: Oppose with comment

As the Leeward CC Special Education Coordinator, I oppose the recommendation to reappoint Felicia Villalobos to the position of Executive Director of HTSB.

Executive Director (ED)Villalobos has failed to facilitate the review process for new programs in an organized, timely and transparent manner. There were extreme delays in response time, assembling of review committees, and review of program proposals in addition to inaccuracies and vague generalized disapproval statements in the review commentary which brings into question the integrity of the review process under the direction of ED Villalobos. I even venture to question whether the exhaustive amount of content-specific information, assessment descriptions, alignment crosswalk tables, and response commentary were actually reviewed at all since the descriptions, links and evidence all specifically addressed/answered the questions raised in the commentary. As someone who serves as a lead on quality assurances for our college accreditation through ACCJC and our Teacher Education Program's national accreditation through AAQEP, the review process facilitated by ED Villalobos was highly disorganized, biased, and prolonged. The program approval process has been under so much scrutiny by the EPP community, that during the January 8, 2026 Board of Education meeting, it was suggested that an audit be conducted to address the handling of program reviews by HTSB. Testimony from UHM's Assessment Specialist, our Kaiapuni preparation programs, UHWO, UHM's SPED faculty and more raise serious concerns about how HTSB has handled program reviews. Ultimately, the individuals who lose in such bureaucratic delays are the children we are charged with serving. As we increase the number of public preschool classrooms to nearly 100 statewide, it is important to note that [priority enrollment](#) is designated for students who qualify for special education services and students from low income families, therefore, our state is in dire need of culturally responsive preparation programs in this area.

The role of the committee and HTSB is to establish and corroborate alignment of a preparation program with the Hawai'i Teacher Performance Standards. Per HAR §302A-805.5 HTSB's primary role is "Approval of teacher education programs; professional development of teachers. The board shall be responsible for approving teacher education programs that meet the standards established by the board." Content and grade-level expertise and curriculum design are subject to review by institutional curriculum committee review and national accreditation bodies. The qualifications for hire by an IHE are extremely rigorous and faculty deemed qualified to design and deliver content-specific curriculum meet the highest standards of academic qualifications and industry-related experience. Leeward CC is accredited by ACCJC and our TEP is accredited by AAQEP. These bodies have comprehensive and OBJECTIVE methods for quality assurance,

including curriculum. As an IHE, we undergo exhaustive curriculum committee review, 5-year reviews, Anthology course learning outcome evaluations, and faculty hiring processes are very rigorous to ensure MQs, DQs ,etc. are met or exceeded prior to hire. All faculty have kuleana to provide a dossier showing how we ensure courses are aligned with current relevant industry standards, that courses are adapted, updated, and improved. We house an Online Innovation Center dedicated to supporting instructor training in distance education, including Quality Matters Training to ensure DE courses are engaging, interactive, and address AI. Conversely, there are no minimum qualifications or desired qualifications for the HTSB review committee. Quite frankly, the curriculum designed for the Leeward CC SPED PK-3 program was a culmination of effort from powerhouses in the ECE SPED community who surpass the foundational and practical knowledge of the assembled committee or HTSB board members in the field of early childhood special education. The curriculum team is an assembly of the cream of the crop of early childhood special educators in the state of Hawai'i and beyond. This group of individuals are dedicated to serving on a 4 year OSEP grant composed of 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](#).

I should mention, the process for program approvals under the direction of previous HTSB Executive Directors was clearly communicated. On the contrary, the response to our inquiry about a timeline for review, Executive Director Villalobos's response was, "*Since each program review is different, I am unable to give you a specific timeline. The review timeline will be up to the Review Team and their questions and/or the additional information/clarification they may request from LCC.*" Prior to Executive Director Villalobos' appointment, the program review procedures were consistent, clearly outlined and collaborative. After approval of authorization to plan a new program, EPPs have one year to submit the HTSB program approval template. By that time, HTSB would assemble a committee to review the program. The EPP would receive the names and qualifications (bio) of each committee member and HTSB would seek approval of the committee members from the EPP deeming the committee members credible. After approval of the committee, they would have 4 weeks to review and provide feedback and then 2 weeks later (or the next upcoming Board meeting, whichever arrived sooner) the NBI would be voted upon based on the recommendation of the Review Committee and recommendation responses of the EPP proposing the new program. HTSB did NOT request EPP approval of the Review Committee and HTSB did NOT assemble a Review Committee until 3 months after HTSB received the Program Approval Template following approval of [NBI 21-05 Revised](#) and [NBI 21-10 Revised](#). Furthermore, the review committee included partisan members, leaning on a HTSB board member without ECE background, the SPED ECE coordinator at UHM (the only SPED ECE licensure pathway in the state) and an elementary math specialist who finished her graduate degree at UHM degree during this review process, whose specialization and background is math and not ECE. Their duty as a review committee was to determine if the program aligns with the teacher performance standards set by the Board, not to interpret curriculum. Incidentally after the first review, the UHM Teacher Recruitment Specialist recused herself from serving on the committee.

Leeward CC has been in the process of adding SPED PK-3 as a field to the Advanced Professional Certificate in SPED since September 2021. Below is an outline of the extremely convoluted process we have undergone for adding a grade level to a SATEP through HTSB.

Key Concerns:

1. REVIEW TIMELINE:

After the Program Review was submitted to HTSB on 9/1/2024, it took 12 weeks for a HTSB Program Review Team to provide feedback (11/24/24). In less than 2 weeks LCC provided a comprehensive response addressing each concern in extensive detail. It took HTSB another 3 months to complete a second review after which they provided LCC with a "Faculty Response Portrait" on 2/27/25. LCC designed 3 new courses in ECE SPED and provided another consolidated narrative addressing each recommendation in NBI 21-10 and summarizing key program revisions on 11/18/25. After 4

months without a response from HTSB, we were asked a Praxis-related inquiry and I requested a follow up on the status of our response to the committee’s feedback. We were provided with [NBI 25-29](#) 3/8/2026 citing the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) does not recommend provisional program approval for Leeward Community College’s (LCC) Special Education (SPED) P-3 Initial Licensure program.

See Testimony Opposing [NBI 25-29](#).

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

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.

NEW COURSE: [Field Practicum: Special Education PK-3](#) (450 hours SPED field hours in PK-3) [EC/PK-3 SPED Observation Tool](#) – A streamlined, developmentally appropriate evaluation tool aligned to CEC EC/ECSE standards and Hawai‘i’s early learning frameworks.

Prior to the development of these three brand new ECE SPED courses, Leeward CC also redesigned all 5 core SPED methodology courses to include early childhood SPED content, which was provided to HTSB in September 2023 after a two-year process of designing and piloting the content that began in Fall 2021. The new SPED ECE curriculum for those 5 SPED methods courses is linked here again for your reference:

Content Standards Matrix	
<u>Sheet Descriptor: This sheet is to provide content standards required by HTSB.</u>	
Program Name	Content Standards
Advanced Professional Certificate in	<u>Early Intervention (EI) / Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Standards</u>

Special Education PreK-3																												
Courses and Assessments	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.2	2.3	3.1	3.2	3.3	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	5.1	5.2	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.5	6.6	6.7	7.1	7.2	7.3	7.4	
ED 330: Special Education Law and Individualized Education Program Development - Key Assessment: IEP Referral Process and Evaluation Determination	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	
ED 331: Special Education Assessment - Key Assessment: Assessing a Young Child's Development and Developing Goals	x	x	x	x							x	x	x	x	x	x											x	
ED 332: English Language Arts Instruction and Interventions - Key Assessment: Pre-Reading Activities	x														x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	
ED 332: English Language Arts Instruction and Interventions -	x	x	x	x											x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	

and Early Learning	1.2 Candidates apply knowledge of normative sequences of early development, individual differences, and families' social, cultural, and linguistic diversity to support each child's development and learning across contexts.
	1.3 Candidates apply knowledge of biological and environmental factors that may support or constrain children's early development and learning as they plan and implement early intervention and instruction.
	1.4 Candidates demonstrate an understanding of characteristics, etiologies, and individual differences within and across the range of abilities, including developmental delays and disabilities, their potential impact on children's early development and learning, and implications for assessment, curriculum, instruction, and intervention.
Standard 2: Partnering with Families	2.1 Candidates apply their knowledge of family-centered practices, family systems theory, and the changing needs and priorities in families' lives to develop trusting, respectful, affirming, and culturally responsive partnerships with all families that allow for the mutual exchange of knowledge and information.
	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.
	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.
Standard 3: Collaboration and Teaming	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.
	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.
	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.
Standard 4: Assessment Processes	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.
	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.
	4.3 Candidates analyze, interpret, document, and share assessment information using a strengths-based approach with families and other professionals.
	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>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> <p>7.2 Candidates engage in ongoing reflective practice and access evidence-based information to improve their own practices.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>7.4 Candidates practice within ethical and legal policies and procedures. Field and Clinical Experience Standard.</p>
<p>Standard 8: Field and Clinical Experience</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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 for 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 revised curriculum embedded in 5 existing core methodology courses linked:

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 prolonged and redundant review processes as well as vague or unsubstantiated kickback we have experienced during the HTSB review process appears to be an abuse and overreach of authority. As referenced earlier, Institutions of Higher Education such as Leeward CC 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- a 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’s 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."

Conclusion:

I wholeheartedly love being part of the education community in Hawai'i, I have served on TECC for over a decade, I have been a longstanding member of the Teacher Education Advisory Board for UHWO; I am part of the UH systemwide Education Convenings to work towards more streamlined articulations across campuses. I love collaborating with my colleagues in every sector. I have piloted new programs with HIDOE from the ground up; I have written grants for HSTA to develop new PD for teachers; when HIDOE needed RBTs for children with ASD, we developed the training credential course; when the state needed more sheltered instruction courses, we designed two new ELL courses. When UHM's [REDACTED] asks for help with any initiatives I have answered the call: I volunteered to coordinate and host the "It's Great to Be a Teacher" event; I have judged at the ED Rising competition. Anytime HTSB has asked for volunteers to join workforce committees I have volunteered my time – I was part of the Alternative Pathways Workgroup, I was part of the Hawaiian language, History and Culture Workgroup, and I recently volunteered to be part of the Mentor/Cooperating Teacher Workgroup. I am inspired on a daily basis by our collective impact as leaders in education. We collaborate with our hearts, we create with passion, and we all care deeply about serving the children across Hawai'i, with a special focus on areas identified as high need such as special education and early childhood education. If I can be candid, the only entity I have not felt a spirit of collaboration and collegiality with is with the current leadership of the Hawai'i Teachers Standards Board. The dynamic should be supportive, mutually respectful, and we should always feel as though we are working towards shared visions. Instead, many of us in the EPP community question the overreach of authority and the current relationship between EPPs and HTSB feels more combative and punitive than anything. HAR 302A -805.5 and 6 define HTSB's role: to approve SATEPs; participate in efforts related to teacher quality such as PD and conducting research.

As a side note, both our children have attended or are currently attending public school in the Leeward and Central district of O'ahu, the same community we focus on for teacher preparation at Leeward CC. My son's 3rd grade teacher, Ms. [REDACTED] is an alumnus of LCC's teacher education program and is in the same hula halau as our kids. My other son's middle school counselor is an alumnus of LCC's teacher education program. She attended my online and in person courses and I sat with her multiple times advising her on how to advocate for her little brother in IEP meetings. I am vested in producing teachers who will lead classrooms of my own children, my nieces, my nephews and grandchildren to come. I do not appreciate ED Villalobos' repeated *opinions* degrading the integrity of online asynchronous delivery formats as they are not appropriate. For over three years, at least once a week, I missed dinner and quality time with my infant and toddler to pursue my PhD in Education. I pumped breastmilk for my new newborn in a Wist Hall bathroom stall instead of holding my baby to feed him. Distance education and asynchronous learning opens access to so many non-traditional students with conflicting responsibilities such as work, family (i.e., caring for children or elderly parents). I

believe ED Villalobos lacks objective, open-minded and forward-thinking leadership and would not recommend reappointing Felicia Villalobos to the position of Executive Director for a four-year term beginning July 1, 2026, and concluding June 30, 2030.



Christina Keaulana, Ph.D.
Pronouns: she/her/hers
Special Education Coordinator
University of Hawai'i, Leeward Community College
96-045 Ala 'Ike, ED 210
Pearl City, HI 96782
Phone: 808-455-0480
E-mail: ctk8@hawaii.edu
leeward.hawaii.edu/teach

E hāhai i ke ala o ka hana pa'akīkī.
Pursue the path of challenging work.

TO: Hawaii Teacher Standards Board
650 Iwilei Road, Suite 268
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

FROM: Stephanie Buelow
Professor and Program Chair of Undergraduate & Post Baccalaureate Programs
School of Teacher Education, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SUBJECT: General Business Meeting
Testimony
Agenda Item VI.F: NBI 25-41 The Hawaii Teacher Standards Board Executive
Director's Evaluation Recommendation for 2025-2026

Agenda Item VI.F: NBI 25-42 The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board Executive
Director Recommendation to the Board of Education

POSITION: Oppose

Aloha Chair Miyamae, Vice Chair Ozaki, and Members of the Hawai'i Teachers Standards Board,

My name is Stephanie Buelow, and I am a Professor and the Program Chair of Undergraduate & Post Baccalaureate Programs in the School of Teacher Education (STE) at UH-Mānoa's College of Education.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in opposition** to NBI 25-41 and NBI 25-42, which approves an overall commendable evaluation of Executive Director Felicia Villalobos, and NBI 25-42, which recommends the reappointment of the Executive Director.

While the Executive Director's evaluation reflects input gathered from Board members, HTSB staff, and the Executive Director herself, it does not include feedback from key external stakeholders, particularly Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) and community partners who work closely with HTSB and are directly impacted by its policies and processes. Relying primarily on internally generated data, especially within a structure where the Executive Director holds positional authority, raises concerns about the completeness and objectivity of the evaluation. A more comprehensive assessment would include perspectives from all stakeholders engaged in program review, teacher preparation, and implementation efforts across the state.

Mahalo for your time and consideration, and for your continued commitment to public education in Hawai'i.

TO: Hawaii Teacher Standards Board
General Business Meeting
650 Iwilei Road, Suite 268
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

FROM: Stephanie Buelow
Professor and Program Chair of Undergraduate & Post Baccalaureate Programs
School of Teacher Education, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SUBJECT: General Business Meeting
Testimony - Agenda Item E, NBI 25-32 Establish Committee to Strengthen
Program Review Process

POSITION: Support

Aloha Chair Miyamae, Vice Chair Ozaki, and Members of the Hawai'i Teachers Standards Board,

My name is Stephanie Buelow and I am the Program Chair of Graduate & Non-Licensure Programs in the School of Teacher Education (STE) at UH-Mānoa.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support** of NBI 25-32, which proposes the formation of a committee to strengthen the HTSB program review process. I commend the Board for taking steps to respond to concerns raised by educators, state agencies, and community members. I also strongly support a collaborative approach in which SATEPs are engaged as partners and co-developers in shaping any revisions to requirements and procedures.

Through meaningful collaboration between EPPs and HTSB, there is strong potential to enhance our educator preparation system and better serve teacher candidates across Hawai'i. Mahalo for your leadership and dedication to strengthening our public education system.



The Senate
Ka 'Aha Kenekoa

STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

April 22, 2026

Aloha Chair and Members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on New Business Item 25-42 regarding the Executive Director position.

I am writing to recommend that the Board refrain from taking action on this item at this time.

At its core, this is a question of timing and process. Decisions of this magnitude—particularly those involving long-term executive leadership—carry implications that extend well beyond the present moment. As such, they warrant the participation of the full Board as it is intended to be constituted moving forward, not solely as it exists today.

The Board is on the verge of welcoming newly confirmed members who will soon assume their roles and responsibilities. These individuals were selected through a formal confirmation process to help shape the Board's direction. Proceeding before they are seated effectively excludes them from a foundational decision that will influence the Board's work during their tenure.

Equally important is maintaining public confidence in the Board's decision-making. Acting on a multi-year contract during a period of transition may create the perception that a consequential determination is being made without the benefit of full representation or continuity. Even if unintentional, this perception can undermine trust in the process.

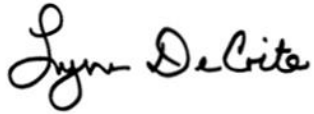
There is also ongoing legislative activity that could modify how the Executive Director role is filled and overseen. Taking action now, ahead of that outcome, risks placing the Board in a position where its decision may soon conflict with or need to be revisited in light of new statutory requirements.

For these reasons, a pause would be the most prudent course. Allowing the new members to be seated and the legislative process to conclude would ensure that this decision is made with full participation, clearer guidance, and stronger alignment with evolving policy.

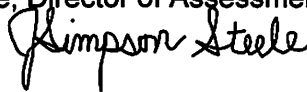
April 22, 2026
Page 2 of 2

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynn DeCoite". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lynn DeCoite
State Senator, District 7
Chair, Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism

HTSB TESTIMONY**DATE:** April 24, 2026**FROM:** Nathan Murata, Dean of the UHM College of Education**DESIGNEE:** Jamie Simpson Steele, Director of Assessment, Accreditation, and Accountability**MEETING:** General Business**AGENDA ITEM:** VI.F: NBI 25-41 The Hawaii Teacher Standards Board Executive Director's Evaluation Recommendation for 2025-2026**POSITION:** Oppose

This testimony articulates a dissenting perspective to the Board's recommendation of a "Commendable" evaluation for Executive Director Villalobos for the 2025–2026 evaluation cycle. While the Director demonstrates a strong commitment to educator quality and rigorous preparation, her current approach does not meet several key functions across leadership, communication, and administrative standards.

Standard 1: Leadership and Organizational Process

- **Process Clarity and Consistency:** Procedures for NBI submissions and program reviews are unclear and often shifting, leading to growing frustration. Stakeholders report receiving contradictory guidance that differs between verbal communication and written templates.
- **Mission Barriers:** Current barriers hinder the mission of increasing qualified teachers. The Director often advocates for punitive actions or "hard lines" rather than facilitating collaborative problem-solving.
- **Inaccurate Reporting:** In multiple cases, NBIs presented to the Board contained factual inaccuracies that did not reflect submitted materials or faculty testimony.
- **Operational Scrutiny:** Program reviews frequently involve scrutiny that extends beyond the HTSB's purview, encroaching on institutional governance and accreditation functions.

Standard 2: Communication and Stakeholder Relations

- **Conflict Resolution:** The Director's communication style often deflects problems to previous leadership rather than focusing on solution-oriented approaches.
- **Adversarial Tone:** The current leadership tone is perceived by external partners as adversarial rather than collaborative.
- **Stakeholder Impact:** There is a documented failure to maintain effective relations with teacher education institutions and other organizations. This has led to programs withdrawing or losing the ability to recruit and admit viable cohorts.

Standard 3: Standards of Professionalism

- **Lack of Responsiveness:** The Director has not been responsive to concerns communicated directly to her and has not monitored the impact of her actions on others.
- **Professional Dynamics:** There is a noted lack of self-reflective practice and a resistance to acknowledging how current dynamics affect professional relationships.

Standard 4: Administrative Responsibilities and Program Oversight

- **Regulatory Overreach:** Review committees have requested data outside the scope of licensure approval, including tuition rates, registration structures, assignment weighting, and access to live course sites. Lack of clear procedures and guidelines in the Standards Board review process has resulted in lack of transparency, delays and inefficiencies, and confusion among stakeholders about expectations and requirements for the HTSB review.
- **Misalignment of Standards:** Reviewers have applied standards irrelevant to specific program types—such as applying initial licensure standards to "add-a-field" or teacher leader programs.
- **Resource Management:** The Director frequently directs administrative tasks, such as PII collection, to Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) while maintaining that HTSB resources are unavailable.
- **Real-World Consequences:** Extended review timelines and late-stage requirements have caused delays where candidates may not be licensed in time to teach, exacerbating statewide teacher shortages.

Recommendations for Improvement

The current climate necessitates a reaffirmation of the HTSB's specific scope, distinguishing licensure alignment from institutional governance. A positive step forward includes supporting the proposed **NBI 25-32: Establish Committee to Strengthen Program Review Process**. Moving forward, strong leadership is required to establish clear guidelines, improve transparency, and foster a proactive, collaborative culture within the HTSB.

April 22, 2026

TESTIMONY

TO: Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) General Business Meeting

FROM: Dr. Mary Heller, Education Division Chair & Director of Teacher Education
University of Hawai'i West Oahu --- A Private Citizen Mary Heller

Digitally signed by Mary Heller
Date: 2026.04.22 13:50:59 -1000'

RE: Agenda Item: VI.F: NBI 25-42 The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board Executive
Director Recommendation to the Board of Education

POSITION: I oppose the recommendation to reappoint Felicia Villalobos as Executive
Director of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board.

For the past 20 years, it has been my privilege and responsibility to oversee the design and implementation of UHWO's standards-based licensure pathways for Hawaii's K-12 teachers. Working with the HTSB to ensure fully accredited, state and nationally approved Educator Preparation Programs is essential. However, under Executive Director Villalobos's leadership, the licensure approval process has become prolonged and convoluted. Given the dire need for licensed teachers in the State of Hawai'i, this fact is unacceptable.

The following unpredictable timeline illustrates what I and my colleagues have experienced in the context of UHWO's proposed Early Childhood Education (ECED) P-K and P-3 add-a-field licensure pathways for both Preservice teacher candidates and Inservice teachers.

AY 2024-25 & AY 2025-26

- 11/18/2024
 - Initial application submitted, covering all three licensure pathways. The 66-page application required detailed information about not only the ECED licensure curriculum, but also our elementary (K-6) state approved and CAEP nationally accredited program, including Appendices containing course syllabi, program evaluation rubrics, and all faculty CVs.
 - Neither rubric nor evaluation criteria was provided as guidance, to assist with the preparation of the proposal.

- 12/02/2024
 - During this zoom meeting the Executive Director informed us that we could not submit a proposal for both Preservice and Inservice add-a-field programs, a requirement that we had not been previously apprised. We were

then required to revise and re-submit only one pathway proposal (Inservice Teacher Add-a-Field) to the review committee.

- Prioritizing review of the Inservice Teacher only add-a-teaching field application was made without prior consultation with our team.
 - As a result, placing on hold the P-K and P-3 Preservice ECED licensure program approval for going on two academic years has seriously jeopardized Early Childhood Workforce Development in the State of Hawai'i.
- 12/20/2024 – 01/13/2026
 - A total of 4 revised proposals were submitted per HTSB request.
 - Continuous delays in program review committee feedback and subsequent requests for further revisions occurred throughout this time period.
 - Committee feedback contained shifting expectations, and no rubric was ever provided to assist in the revision process.
 - April 24, 2026, 12:30 pm
 - NBI 25-28: Provisional approval of UHWO's Add-A-Field P-3 licensure program is on the Teacher Education Committee Meeting Agenda

RECOMMENDATION:

In closing, I believe it is in the best interest of all UH System Educator Preparation Programs that the HTSB not recommend Executive Director Villalobos to be reappointed for another 4-year term. There is a need for leadership that is focused not only on transparency but also the implementation of clearly articulated policy and procedures that support the timely development and approval of licensure programs aimed at eliminating the growing teacher shortage in the State of Hawai'i.



UNIVERSITY of HAWAI'I MĀNOA

College of Education Department of Special Education

HTSB TESTIMONY

DATE: April 22, 2026

FROM: Sara Cook, Professor, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, College of Education, Department of Special Education

MEETING: General Business

AGENDA ITEM: VI.F: NBI 25-41 The Hawaii Teacher Standards Board Executive Director's Evaluation Recommendation for 2025-2026

POSITION: Oppose

* * * * *

My name is Dr. Sara Cook, and I am a Professor of Special Education at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I am submitting testimony in opposition to NBI 25-41, which recommends a "commendable" rating for the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) Executive Director for the 2025–2026 evaluation cycle.

I want to begin by acknowledging the importance of HTSB's role in maintaining high standards for the teaching profession in Hawai'i. As an educator and program leader, I strongly support rigorous preparation, licensure, and accountability systems that ensure all students are served by well-prepared teachers. This is a shared responsibility across entities—including educator preparation programs (EPPs), the Hawai'i Department of Education (HIDOE), and HTSB—and it requires strong, collaborative partnerships.

Based on my direct experience working within the HTSB program review process, I do not believe the current leadership demonstrates a "commendable" level of performance in collaboration, communication, or partnership. Whereas the evaluation highlights strong administrative capacity and a commitment to high standards, the HTSB Executive Director Evaluation (NBI 25-41) contains qualitative data that raise concerns about unclear processes, strained stakeholder relationships, and barriers to program approval. These concerns are not isolated—they reflect broader systemic issues.

In my experience, HTSB's current approach does not function as a collaborative partnership. Instead, it often feels adversarial, where preparation programs are treated less as expert partners and more as entities to be scrutinized and controlled. This concern is explicitly reflected in the HTSB Executive Director Evaluation (NBI 25-41), Standard 1 comments, which note that "processes for NBI submission and program review are unclear, which has led to growing frustration over time," and that the Executive Director "does not facilitate conversation to address these barriers, but rather advocates for hard lines and punitive actions."

The same evaluation further notes a lack of "multiple perspectives with balanced dialogue" and concerns regarding maintaining effective relationships with partner organizations. These statements, drawn directly from the Board's own evaluation, raise serious concerns about whether the current approach reflects the collaborative model that Hawai'i's education system requires.

My own experience submitting an Add-a-Field Teacher Leader program reinforces these concerns. Although our program is an established, accredited graduate program aligned with the Teacher Leader Model Standards, the review process introduced shifting and expanding expectations over time. We were asked to provide increasingly detailed course-level artifacts—such as assignments, handouts, and instructional materials—that were not part of the original application requirements. Expectations also appeared to shift across frameworks, creating confusion about the criteria being used for approval. At multiple points, feedback did not identify specific deficiencies, but instead introduced new requirements, effectively creating a moving target.

This experience aligns directly with concerns documented in the HTSB Executive Director Evaluation (NBI 25-41), comments, which state that “opportunities to advance the teaching profession... are met with scrutiny that extend beyond HTSB’s purview for program review,” and that processes require additional evidence requests that create inefficiencies for EPPs.

The evaluation also highlights broader concerns about stakeholder interactions, noting in comments that leadership often creates “more friction than is necessary with external partners and legislators,” and that decision-making does not align with facilitating reasonable licensure pathways. Staff feedback further raises concerns about internal climate, noting that at times individuals feel they must “tiptoe” in response to leadership interactions.

Taken together, these statements—drawn directly from the HTSB Executive Director Evaluation—suggest a pattern of unclear processes, expanding expectations, and strained relationships with key partners. This pattern is inconsistent with a “commendable” rating, particularly in a state facing ongoing teacher shortages that require strong collaboration across systems. Whereas I acknowledge there are several comments in the qualitative data that reflect the strength of Director Villalobos’s leadership, the positive testimony does not reflect the experiences of actual community stakeholders required to work and collaborate with HTSB on program proposals, reports, audits, and accreditation.

As Senator Troy Hashimoto noted in the March 30 Senate Education Committee meeting, Hawai‘i “desperately needs a licensing board that operates as a collaborative partner.” I could not agree more. HTSB plays a critical role in Hawai‘i’s education system, and strong leadership is essential. However, leadership must be evaluated not only on administrative performance, but on the ability to build trust, foster collaboration, and support a shared mission across partners.

At this time, I do not believe the evidence supports a “commendable” rating. I respectfully urge the Board to consider a nuanced evaluation—one that fully accounts for stakeholder experiences and prioritizes a shift toward a more collaborative, transparent, and partnership-driven approach.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued work in service of Hawai‘i’s educators and students.



Sara Cook



The Senate
Ka 'Aha Kenekoa

STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

April 22, 2026

Aloha Chair and Members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board,

I am writing in strong opposition to New Business Item (NBI) 25-42, relating to the proposed recommendation to the Hawai'i State Board of Education for the reappointment of Ms. Felicia Villalobos as Executive Director for a four-year term from July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2030.

The issue here is not just the individual or the position, it is the timing and the process.

Within the next few weeks, the composition of this Board will change. The Senate has already confirmed incoming members who will soon take their seats and be responsible for the direction of this body. Moving forward with a long-term executive contract before they are sworn in shuts them out of a decision they will ultimately have to carry. That is not a small procedural concern, it goes directly to governance and accountability.

There is also active legislation this session that may change how this position is selected and overseen. Acting now, before that work is finished, risks getting ahead of the policy direction the Legislature is still in the process of deciding. A four-year commitment made under the current structure could limit the effectiveness of those changes.

For those reasons, I strongly oppose moving forward on this item at this time and urge the Board to hold off until the new members are seated, and the legislative process is complete.

Mahalo for your consideration and for your service to our educators and students.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samantha DeCorte".

Senator Samantha DeCorte, Senate District 22
Ko 'Olina, Nānākuli, Mā'ili, Wai'anae, Mākaha, and Mākua
(808) 586-7793 | sendecorte@capitol.hawaii.gov
Hawaii State Capitol, Room #223, Honolulu HI, 96813



[EXTERNAL] Testimony for NBI 25-41 & 25-42

From Aaron J Levine <alevine@hawaii.edu>

Date Wed 4/22/2026 2:23 PM

To HTSB <htsb@hawaii.gov>

TO: Hawaii Teacher Standards Board
650 Iwilei Road, Suite 268
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

FROM: Aaron Levine
Partnership and Placement Coordinator
School of Teacher Education, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SUBJECT: General Business Meeting
Testimony

Agenda Item VI.F: NBI 25-41 The Hawaii Teacher Standards Board Executive Director's Evaluation Recommendation for 2025-2026
Agenda Item VI.F: NBI 25-42 The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board Executive Director Recommendation to the Board of Education

POSITION: Oppose

Aloha Chair Miyamae, Vice Chair Ozaki, and Members of the Hawai'i Teachers Standards Board,

My name is Aaron Levine. I am a teacher educator in the School of Teacher Education at the College of Education, UH Manoa.

I oppose *NBI 25-41, The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board Executive Director's Evaluation Recommendation for 2025-2026* and *NBI 25-42, Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board Executive Director Recommendation to the Board of Education*.

The process to evaluate the Executive Director did not include very important stakeholder groups such as preparation programs, HIDOE, and community partners. As such, the recommendations stated in the NBI's reflect an exclusive, albeit important, perspective of HTSB Board Members and Staff. Reaching out to a broader stakeholder group would provide more comprehensive data to better assess the Executive Director's overall performance.

Given the deadline for this testimony I do not have the time to provide a lengthy evaluation of the Executive Director's (ED) performance using the existing Standards. While there are areas I believe the ED is competent, i.e., being informed about national trends and policy in different states, and advocacy with the legislature, the ED has at times fallen short in consistently reaching out and collaborating with external stakeholders such as preparation programs.

Too many proposed NBIs that directly impact stakeholders appear before the Board for consideration without prior consultation with the stakeholders. This gives stakeholders a very limited window for input during formal testimony, and most of the time any critical feedback at the final hour appears to be marginalized given that the overwhelming majority of NBIs pass. To be fair, the ED's agenda is ultimately driven by the HTSB, so it is difficult to pinpoint what parties may be driving this perceived non-collaborative approach to working with stakeholders.

A more proactive collaborative approach is necessary in order for HTSB to implement thoughtful policy that works to support the teaching profession and ultimately support P-12 student success.

Mahalo for volunteering your time to HTSB and for your commitment to teacher quality.

Testimony

Name: Michelle Igarashi, PhD

Position: Dean of Arts and Sciences

Organization: Leeward Community College

Meeting: April 24, 2026

Agenda item: TITLE: New Business Item 25-29 Leeward Community College's Special Education P-3 Initial Licensure Program Review Decision

Position: Oppose Review Committee's Recommendation with Comment

Leeward Community College's Special Education Program is seeking approval to recommend completers for initial licensure in the grade band below: Special Education, P-3.

Position: Leeward CC (LEE) strongly supports the proposal and requests HTSB approve the application for LEE's Special Education P-3 Initial Licensure Program.

We urge the Board to approve this application based on the following points:

1. Parity with Existing Accredited Programs

The Review Committee contends LEE's program consists of approximately 22 semester credits, which is insufficient compared to a 30-credit "standard." However, the proposal includes

- Credit Hour Alignment: LEE's program consists of 21 credits of methodology coursework and 4 credits of field practicum. The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's (UHM) Post-Baccalaureate in SPED, also requires 21 credits of content study.
- Field Experience: LEE's program requires 450 hours of supervised clinical experience, meeting the strict requirements of HAR §8-54-19 (5)(A).

2. Comprehensive Program Redesign and New Coursework

The recommendation claims the program relies on K-6 and 6-12 materials, thereby not applicable to P-3. LEE has undergone a rigorous two-year process to develop early childhood-specific content, which was shared with HTSB in September 2023:

- Targeted New Courses: LEE developed three brand-new courses specifically for this licensure: Early Childhood Development and Intervention: Theory into Practice, IDEA Part C/Part B (619) and IFSP/IEP Development, and a dedicated P-3 Field Practicum.
- Specialized Content: As explained via submitted syllabi and course descriptions, these courses are aligned with the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Early

Childhood Special Education standards, Hawai'i Early Learning Development Standards (HELDS), and/or IDEA Part C/B.

3. Addressing the "Insufficient Evidence" Findings

The Committee cited "insufficient evidence" for various Hawai'i Specific Requirements (HAR §8-54-19). However, the program has already integrated those revisions into its core methodology:

- Literacy and Reading: LEE's ED 332 course was specifically redesigned to introduce candidates to the developmental continuum of literacy and support language development for early learners.
- Aligned with the Hawai'i Early Learning Development Standards (HELDS), LEE's curriculum ensures candidates meet state frameworks through a "Content Standards Matrix" that mandates high levels of cultural responsiveness. Candidates must apply knowledge of "social, cultural, and linguistic diversity" to build partnerships with families and design "meaningful and culturally responsive learning experiences."
- Assessment Tools: LEE created a new Early Childhood/PK-3 SPED Candidate Observation Form to ensure candidates are evaluated on developmentally appropriate practices.

4. Critical Need for Early Childhood SPED Educators

LEE's program is uniquely positioned to address the shortage of qualified P-3 Special Education teachers through its established partnerships with SPED classrooms across diverse communities. Rejecting this program based on perceived credit counts—which align with other state institutions—unnecessarily delays the entry of qualified professionals into Early Childhood Special Education, an area facing critical demand.

Leeward Community College has demonstrated a clear commitment to meeting HTSB standards through extensive course redesign and the addition of specialized early childhood faculty expertise. We respectfully request that the Board overturn the Committee's recommendation and approve the Special Education P-3 Initial Licensure program to support the growth of Hawai'i's teacher workforce.