

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

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



MAKALAPUA ALENCASTRE, Ed. D.
CHAIRPERSON

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION
(‘AHA KULA HO‘ĀMANA)

<http://CharterCommission.Hawaii.Gov>
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1100, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Tel: (808) 586-3775 Fax: (808) 586-3776

FOR: The University of Hawai‘i at West O‘ahu’s Early Childhood Education P-3
Add a Teaching Field Licensure Program Review Decision
New Business Item (NBI) 25-28

DATE: April 24, 2026

TIME: 12:30 P.M.

COMMITTEE: Hawai‘i Teachers Standard Board
Teacher Education Committee

LOCATION: 650 Iwilei Road, Suite 158
Honolulu, HI 96817

FROM: Ed H. Noh, Ed. D., Executive Director
State Public Charter School Commission

Chair Dr. Gillentine and Members of the Committee:

The State Public Charter School Commission (“Commission”) appreciates the opportunity to offer testimony in **SUPPORT OF THE INTENT of NBI 25-28**:

1. Recommends the provisional approval of the University of Hawai‘i at West O‘ahu Early Childhood Education P-3 Add a Teaching Field licensure program;
2. Acknowledges the growing need for licensed early childhood educators in public school settings; and
3. Recognizes the importance of adequately preparing future early childhood educators to contribute effectively to the workforce.

The Commission appreciates the creation of this additional teacher preparation pathway offered through the ECE P-3 Add a Teaching Field licensure program to address the severe, chronic teacher shortage in Hawai‘i.

As the State of Hawai‘i envisions preschool for all three- and four-year-old keiki by 2032, it is imperative that the state offer a variety of teacher licensure pathways to address this shortage.

While there are multiple teacher licensure programs in elementary education, only UH Mānoa offers a teacher licensure track for early childhood educators. By creating an ECE teacher licensure pathway at UHWO, this will allow teacher candidates living in West O‘ahu to study and learn with colleagues in their own communities. This is a place-based, indigenous approach that allows future teacher candidates to collaborate, apply their understanding of the students they serve, and tailor their coursework accordingly. This non-Honolulu-centric approach acknowledges that there is a unique place-based learning pedagogy that should be considered as teachers develop curricula relevant to the students they serve. This approach will allow teachers to acknowledge and build on students’ strengths while building on areas of challenge.

I urge both UHWO and this committee to work together to create a foundational initial teacher pathway that truly addresses the needs of our keiki in West O‘ahu.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

To: Hawaii State Teacher Standards Board

From: Ann SD Abeshima, Ed.D, Tenured Faculty in Early Childhood Education at Honolulu Community College

Date: April 20, 2026

Subject: Testimony in Support of the UH West Oahu ECED Add a Teaching Field and Initial Licensure Pathways; Friday, April 24, 2026, Teacher Education Committee meeting; New Business

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed licensure initiatives at the University of Hawaii–West Oahu (UHWO). Specifically, I advocate for the approval of the Add a Teaching Field Licensure Pathway and the development of the Initial Licensure Pathway (Pre-K) for transfer students from UH Community Colleges. These initiatives represent a critical step toward professionalizing and sustaining the early childhood workforce in Hawaii.

The expansion of UHWO's capacity is not merely an institutional goal—it is a statewide necessity. UHWO's commitment to serving Oahu, Hawaii Island, Maui, and Kauai ensures that rural and neighbor island communities are not left behind in the push for high-quality early education. By preparing educators within their own communities, we increase the likelihood of long-term retention in the local workforce.

The proposed pathways create a seamless continuum for professional growth. By leveraging the substantial overlap between ECED coursework, UHWO can offer a streamlined route for educators to gain credentials without redundant academic hurdles. The "Add a Teaching Field" option provides an immediate solution for currently licensed teachers to specialize in Pre-K, meeting urgent staffing needs. The Initial Licensure Pathway creates a clear pipeline for UH Community College transfer students, removing the systemic barriers that often discourage qualified candidates from pursuing a four-year degree and state licensure.

The approval of these licensure pathways is a strategic investment in the quality of education for our youngest learners. I urge the Board to approve these initiatives to ensure that every Pre-K classroom in Hawaii is led by a teacher who is not only highly qualified but also community-supported.

Respectfully submitted,



Ann SD Abeshima, Ed.D

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)

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
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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.

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.