

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR



ROY M. TAKUMI  
CHAIRPERSON

**STATE OF HAWAII  
BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

May 15, 2025

TO: Board of Education

FROM: Kaimana Barcarse  
Member, Board of Education

AGENDA ITEM: Board member report on community meetings

---

**I. BACKGROUND**

Pursuant to section 302A-1106.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes, the Hawai'i State Board of Education (Board) is required to hold at least six community forums annually, distinct from formal meetings, to discuss matters related to public education and public libraries. These community meetings serve as a platform for community input rather than policymaking, with at least one forum held in each of Hawai'i's four counties. Two of these meetings were held this spring in Hilo and Kona, on Hawai'i Island.

**II. PRESENTATION**

This memo consolidates stakeholder input from Board community meetings in Hawai'i County from March and April 2025 (Attachment A). Families, educators, and community members expressed both appreciation for dedicated educators and deep concerns about ongoing systemic issues. While innovative practices and strong vision statements exist, implementation gaps remain wide across the three topics areas of the breakout sessions. Community members urge meaningful action that better reflects the Hawai'i State Department of Education's proposed vision of a Hawai'i public school graduate, addresses systemic inequities, and supports those who educate and care for our students.

**a. Student Achievement**

Classroom experiences often fall short of the vision for public school graduates. Stakeholders call for more relevant, hands-on learning such as coding, trades, and place-based projects. They also urge restoring physical education and social-emotional learning, while reducing the overemphasis on standardized testing. Diverse learners, including students with special needs, English learners, and those facing social/emotional challenges, are not adequately supported. Schools need more special education staff, inclusive programming, and behavioral health services rooted in students' lived experiences. Families also feel excluded from decision-making and school life. Clearer communication, accessible meetings, and more inclusive environments are essential to building trust and involvement.

**b. Finance & Infrastructure**

Many campuses, especially in rural communities and Kaiapuni settings, are overcrowded, inaccessible, and unsafe. Long delays and bureaucratic red tape stall critical repairs and upgrades. Stakeholders want accelerated project timelines and equitable funding distribution, especially where growth is expected. Transportation remains unreliable, with bus shortages and poor communication stranding students and burdening families. Improved notification systems and better rural access to buses are needed. Poor learning conditions, housing shortages, and lack of maintained outdoor spaces hurt morale and learning. Investments in teacher housing, proactive maintenance, and community-designed facilities can better support well-being and learning.

**c. Human Resources**

Staffing shortages span beyond teachers, affecting essential roles like educational assistants, clerical staff, and specialists. Outdated hiring processes, low pay, and inequitable advancement deter talent. Educators report burnout and weak leadership, calling for trauma-informed, collaborative administrators who value their staff. To build a strong local pipeline, stakeholders recommend investing in programs like the "Grow Our Own" teachers initiative, removing licensing barriers, and recognizing the value of local expertise.

## **Attachment A**

Stakeholder input from Board community meetings in  
Hawai'i County from March and April 2025

### **Hilo**

**March 27, 2025**

#### *Facilities & Infrastructure*

##### Prioritization of CIP and R&M

- facilities that are ASA accessible need to be addressed
- Facilities - Needed- Everything about it.
- Early preventative R&M
- Maintaining R&M priority list like CIP priority list
- Our older building (cafeteria @ waiakea waena) can't accommodate our current students
- Rural school funding disparity & priority disparity
- Campus upkeep leads to teacher/student health issues
- Legislative pet projects jumping line before CIP issues
- 20 million collected from housing construction not used?

##### Transportation

- Bus situation: update for Big Island
- Transportation shortage

##### Federal Funding Uncertainties

- BOE President Trump wants to dismantle BOE + where is the funding coming from? to fund BOE?
- Free meals for all kids

##### Other

- Teacher housing
- Address effective use of facilities and people vs. memories
- School consolidation possibly...

#### *Human Resources*

- Teacher housing on the big island. Where? When?
- Reclassification for non-teachers should be offered and recognized. SLP/O/PT required CEU's. Admin - required additional coursework.
- Bullying at all levels of the
- Adults need to be the examples
- Teachers really need to know they are valued
- Start licensing Scientific Unit 13 through the Board of Education. Stop asking for licensing through other Boards. It is not needed in the Education World.

- When someone comes in with 15 year experience or even 3 years they should start higher on the Scale without a HAM needed.
- Classified Scientific Unit 13 should be able to move up the pay scale based on education or professional develop.
- DOE-Charter Acknowledgement of PD credits and OTM
- What are we doing to grow our own?
- We need to recruit more teachers to become resident (from Hawai'i) teachers. After High School we should encourage them to try and fill the teachers workforce especially in Elem. schools
- Issue/concern: More PD relating to classification for teachers.
- WIN: Feeling supported w/in profession and wanting to stay in profession.
- A linear focus on teacher recruitment and retention solely focuses on one aspect of education. Schools psychs, SLPs, OT, PT, clerical, EA, Administrators are severely under-staffed social workers.
- Teachers are struggling and that affects student learning
- Leaning on the expertise of our own teachers for PD and curriculum
- Building collaborative campuses amongst all adults.
- Fingerprinting Delays Hiring so anyone accepting a job from the mainland has to do the fingerprinting in Hawai'i. Can there be a partnership with other state FBI or police agencies?
- Hiring classified staff takes months. Requesting "Lists" is ridiculous. Those who apply for positions within a complex should automatically show up for the position they are applying to.
- Bad leadership is a barrier to hiring & retaining quality teachers.
- Principals need better training on leadership.
- People wait for months to show up on a "list" for positions.
- EO- Professional Development or CEUs should help to move us up the payscale just as it does for teachers.
- School psychologist who come from other school districts cannot buy back retirement time as teacher can when entering the DOE. So this makes it hard to recruit as who wants to start at the very beginning for retirement years. This is the same for speech, therapists, occupational therapists, etc. HGEA should look similar to HSTA in the way our educators are treated. Very discriminatory and unfair treatment for those who all work in education.
- Teacher retention is important however there should also be much more focus on other staff especially those in HGEA: School psychologists, behavioral health specialist; pay is horrible
- recruitment and retention is also lacking. Takes months to hire - fingerprinting has to be completed before they start, unlike teachers

### *Student Achievement*

- Knowledge: are high schools going to focus more on needs of state workers...i.e. nursing, educators, mechanics, etc.
- DVR shortage and collaboration with DOE in enacting college and career readiness is lacking. They have not shown up to one IEP for my child who is now 16 – 3 years.
- Getting keiki more 'āina based learning
- IEP compliance: due process (adversarial); lack of legal resources, rep (parents); 1 Tier>appeal in civil court; misrepresentation of info; bullying/violence; Inconclusive investigations; Pervasive; SPED students (invisible disability)
- Expanding HĀ at every level to build identities
- SPED: lack of parent platform; lack of opportunities to engage with DOE outside of school; admin/principal controls outcomes; parents reluctance to report or file complaint.
- Positive: There are teachers who are really trying.
- Communication: need to dissemination meetings to community through social media, local paper, radio spots...
- Using homegrown teachers to create and expand curriculum.
- Wins: The importance of Awareness and Identity – being included in the vision of a public school graduate at Hilo Union School, we do our best to also invest in our students and building their self-esteem, belonging, and social emotional competence.
- The current board focus of All students on grade level negates what we know from empirical research on some students with disabilities. This needs to be revisited.
- Entrepreneurship: use e-shop to encourage [illegible] to [illegible] businesses and encourage local businesses to sponsor/[illegible] kids that have ideas
- Graduate + Knowledge: specify what will be removed before putting something else is put on.
- Reading the public school graduate handout, I couldn't tell if this was written for a mainland school.
- This vision is spot-on but it isn't the reality of what's happening in schools
- Can't get creative, critical thinkers w/ excessive standardized testing.
- Inquiry-based or student lead learning; learning through play.
- Kids need more recess, time to be outside
- Parent on committee

### *Other*

- Waiakea High School Library...closing to establish a building for health education

- Library: Concerns with the public library being on school campuses. This is a safety issue for our children. - Homeless, angry people, etc.
- Charters schools: The charter commission needs more authority over the actual charter schools, in particular when they must enact IDEA. Or the CAS needs line-authority over charter schools.

## **Kona**

**April 28, 2025**

### *Facilities & Infrastructure*

- Insufficient classroom space to adequately accommodate the students;Needing “multiple use” classes/mtg. Space
- Infrastructure to support areas of population growth
- Text books are older than the ones I had
- Staffing/HR: train interested parents; offer Ed. Cert.; housing incentives
- No organized sports in intermediate school.
- Transportation: incentives for carpooling?
- Buses are routinely canceled same day.
- Lunches are super unhealthy & unappealing.
- Lack of buses
- Had Chromebooks during Covid then removed them but work still online.

### *Human Resources*

- Bus drivers lack of busses & drivers: It’s outsourced; teacher retention & recruiting
- Sites need more operational support – most principals could use a non-teaching operational manager
- Keep TESOL program at Kapiolani CC.
- if we want teachers to know + serve students, we need smaller class sizes
- Compensate, grow and celebrate teacher leaders
- Constant turnover and teachers + BHS staff – we’ve had 3 different ELA + soc. studies teachers this year, and VPs/SSC’s can’t meet because they’re teaching
- Expand mentorship to include teacher leaders, clubs, etc.
- Hawaiian studies taught by folx without background
- Administrative support when responding to parents.
- I’m concerned about ICE raids in schools – I know of 2 examples here in West Hawaii. I’m also concerned about steadily increasing demands on teachers, especially regarding special education.
- Student-led conferences are useless for kids who aren’t independent – and cost 4 learning days per year.

- teacher pay and teacher training are a concern in West Hawaii; transportation is a problem.
- Teachers don't get support/training from admin to teach well.
- Increase and compensate multilingual professionals.
- Read & Respond program NOT WORK: student – Chap. 19; no student left behind – hinder child
- They don't have time to be instructional leaders.
- Strategic Outcome 2.1.1 which items in the strategic plan 1-6 have metrics?
- Teacher retention; teacher continued education.
- Vacant positions within DOE/BOE in West Hawaii
- Goal 2.4 complex area collaboration with schools: office staff work together for student achievement; Strategic Plan Priority II
- it's hard to train teachers with no/low subs.
- HR concerns – teachers, especially new ones, being constantly uprooted, keeping them from ever achieving mastery on their grade level subject matter.
- Increase salary across all settings to ensure schools are fully staffed: teachers; support staff; EA; custodians; office; cafeterias; admin – especially district.
- No trauma informed training on behavioral health issues.
- Keek grow our own program
- Disciplinary issues are inconsistent & parents are not allowed basic meetings or appeals. CAS and BOE don't respond until formal complaints.
- Teacher & Substitute Recruitment
- Housing! more teacher/staff housing or subsidy to support rising house housing costs
- Align teacher ed programs to current reality in our schools.
- Teachers transitions into “counselors” with no training.
- HALF of our teachers seem to be new each year.
- Retaining teachers: cost-of-living vs. salary; housing; (teachers must work multiple jobs.)
- Teacher Retention

### ***Student Achievement***

- Too many students push through & cannot read or write; state does not prioritize education education is the first one's they furlough...
- update computer science education to encompass current world needs, such as 1) basic coding infrastructure; 2) web hosting/building 3) popular systems
- What's working? Community engagement, working together, ohana. teachers, keiki, family; community groups
- Ridge to Reef curriculum
- Grow enrichment opportunities, including travel.

- Community schools
- Safety; after school tutor programs 4 students; student support – identify student need
- Na Hopena Ao: focus on Hawaiian Education
- Honor/STEM in high school is great!
- PE is being further removed next year - 30 min 1 day/week for 1/2 semesters. Our kids need to move.
- We have lots of bright spots but the top achievers get better and lower achievers get further behind
- Standards are ridiculously low and students still can't meet levels.
- WINS – place based learning – seeing so many great examples of celebrations of Hawaii's unique culture and traditions in my children's school – Holualoa EI
- How do we empower more/deeper community partnerships in schools.
- WINS: incredible technical educational opportunities at Kealakehe High School. The high value placed on experiential learning in the state, supporting gifted learning.
- Why am I in school; how does it relate to my future; Differing learning styles; Physical exercise.
- Programs to support diverse learners: EL; ASD; deaf/hard of hearing; blind; medically, fragile; programs to all of them to excel in light of their unique circumstances.
- Intermediate school stated "D's get diplomas" as they refused to continue an IEP because the student was not failing.
- Circles of support: connection with themselves and community; how to deal with how they are feeling

#### *Other*

- Be educated wherever you desire, rtn asap.; The longer you're away, the greater the changes to our state/communities may be. Your voice & presence is needed.
- Students love the kupuna/makua at school; hard to find people with 'ike Hawai'i; Not enough incentive to rtn to the classroom.
- Food donations/USDA?: Allow donations of fruit from farming communities, i.e. banana, papaya (or other fruit in season) to put something in the kids stomachs.