

Student Achievement Committee

Name

Alex Harris

Organization

Harold KL Castle Foundation

Position/Title

President

Agenda Item

III. Department of Education update on personal transition plan

Position

Support

Written Testimony

Write Testimony

We strongly support the Department's intended action on this update item.

The Personal Transition Plan policy is not merely a graduation checkbox — it is one of the most consequential tools we have for ensuring Hawaii's young people are genuinely prepared for life after high school. DOE guidelines outlining the basic components of personal transition plans haven't changed in years, yet the urgency of the problem they address has only grown. Hawaii's high cost of living means young people must make smart choices — ones that help them be upwardly mobile — and far too many are leaving high school without a clear direction. Compared to a decade ago, there are far more resources and information to guide young people to enroll in college, but limited support to help students learn about and pursue the remaining options — enlisting in the military, entering the workforce with marketable credentials, or exploring careers through apprenticeships and work-based learning.

Focus groups that we sponsored of dozens of opportunity youth surfaced the experiences of youth who fell through these gaps. Schools that take the PTP seriously already demonstrate what's possible: Hilo High School aims to ensure 100% completion of personal transition plans and help over 90% of students actively pursue their post-graduation goals by fall 2026, while Molokai High is implementing a more robust Personal Transition Plan based on a newly developed badging system that incorporates career exploration, work experiences, and community service.

Personal transition plans are critical to get students on track, but not all high schoolers recognize the importance of the plans — which is precisely why strong, consistent Board policy matters. By increasing the number of high school graduates with a clear plan, we will see more students graduate from college, join the armed forces, apprentice in the skilled trades, or find an entry-level job where there is a real chance at advancement and upward mobility. We urge the Board to strengthen its commitment to this policy and remain engaged during the implementation cycle.