



To: Committee on Education Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair, Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice-Chair
AND Committee Members

Re: Support for SB421

From: HE'E Coalition, Deborah Bond-Upson, Interim Director

Date: February 27, 2025

Hui for Excellence in Education, or "HE'E," is a statewide coalition of diverse stakeholders committed to working collaboratively to identify opportunities to improve public education. We work to provide Hawai'i families and organizations with a resource for educational policy.

HE'E strongly supports SB421 which would require all public schools to administer universal screenings for kindergarten through third grade students to identify those at risk for dyslexia and other developmental language disabilities.

Dyslexia screening is a part of a scientific approach to literacy that is showing remarkable gains across the country. Teacher preparation programs for literacy instruction should align with research-based approaches, and professional development opportunities on literacy assessments and instructional strategies must be widely accessible.

Only about half of Hawaii's students meet reading proficiency standards, our need for reading proficiency is great. While the Department of Education provides special education services for students with learning or developmental disabilities, many families may be unaware that their child has underlying reading difficulties due to a learning disability. This lack of awareness delays interventions and support that are crucial for students to succeed. Hawaii is currently the only state in the U.S. without laws specific to dyslexia. For these reasons we strongly support SB 421.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our thoughts.

HE'E Coalition Members and Participants

Academy 21
Alliance for Place Based Learning
American Civil Liberties Union
Atherton YMCA
Education Institute of Hawai'i
*Faith Action for Community Equity
Fresh Leadership LLC
Girl Scouts Hawai'i
*HawaiiKidsCAN
*Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance
*Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
*Hawai'i Association of School Psychologists
Hawai'i Athletic League of Scholars
*Hawai'i Children's Action Network
Hawai'i Education Association
Hawai'i Nutrition and Physical Activity Coalition
*Hawai'i State PTSA
Hawai'i State Student Council
Hawai'i State Teachers Association
Head Start Collaboration Office
It's All About Kids*INPEACE

Joint Venture Education Forum
Junior Achievement of Hawaii
Kamehameha Schools
Kanu Hawai'i
Kaua'i Ho'okele Council
Keiki to Career Kaua'i
Kupu A'e
*Leaders for the Next Generation
Learning First
McREL's Pacific Center for Changing the Odds
Native Hawaiian Education Council
Our Public School
*Pacific Resources for Education and Learning
*Parents and Children Together
*Parents for Public Schools Hawai'i
Special Education Provider Alliance
*Teach for America
The Learning Coalition
US PACOM
University of Hawai'i College of Education
*Youth Service Hawai'i

Voting Members () Voting member organizations vote on action items while individual and non-voting participants may collaborate on all efforts within the Coalition.*