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Suite 3-580
Honolulu, HI 96813
(808) 521-1371

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AmeriCorps
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March 25, 2025

Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board
650 Iwilei Road, Suite 268
Honolulu, HI 96817

Re: Testimony from Jill Baldemor, executive director of Teach For America Hawai'i, for NBI 24-27: Teach For America Audit Findings Year 1 for the March 28, 2025 HTSB Teacher Education Committee Meeting, Agenda item III.H

Aloha Members of the Teacher Education Committee,

Mahalo for your partnership and collaboration in our shared goal of ensuring teacher candidates in Hawai'i are well-prepared to serve our keiki. We are writing in response to NBI 24-27 regarding the Year 1 audit of Teach For America ("TFA")'s educator preparation program. We respectfully submit that TFA has met all four conditions outlined in NBI 23-13.

Condition 1: Submission of Completer Documentation

TFA leadership shall submit documentation for all TFA teacher candidates by July 31 for each academic year, on a form provided by HTSB staff, to verify: license field and grade level of candidate's program; placement subject/teaching lines and grade levels; name of cooperating/mentor teacher; basic skills requirement verification; content knowledge requirement verification; location of placement

TFA met condition 1 by submitting the requested documentation by July 31, 2024.

Further, TFA proactively communicated with HTSB staff that some information could shift due to HIDOE's timeline for finalizing course assignments and placements in Infinite Campus. The Hawai'i Department of Education (HIDOE) shared that information is historically complete for Highly Qualified reporting by October 1. As such, we respectfully request that the Board approve a change in the submission date to October 1 to align with HIDOE's timeline.

Condition 2: Submission of Form 5 Prior to Licensure

All Hawai'i Department of Education TFA completers shall be required to turn in their Notification of Personnel Action (Form 5) prior to being issued a license by HTSB.

TFA met condition 2 by requiring all candidates who are applying for a Provisional License to turn into TFA their Form 5 and upload their Form 5 to their HTSB account for HTSB review.

TFA responds to the issues noted in NBI 24-27 as follows:

- It is noted that two candidates did not submit a Form 5, did not apply for a Provisional License, and resigned from HIDOE. As no license was issued by HTSB, this does not contravene condition 2.

One day, all children will have the opportunity to obtain an excellent education.

- It is noted that one candidate had a name discrepancy. This discrepancy was resolved and the candidate's Form 5 was uploaded before being issued a license, in compliance with condition 2.
- It is noted that three candidates did not upload their Form 5 at the time of their application. Our understanding is that the Form 5 was uploaded prior to being issued a license by HTSB, in compliance with condition 2. Further, TFA did require candidates to turn in their Form 5 to TFA and do attest that we have Form 5s for all candidates that applied for a Provisional License. We are unable to access candidates' HTSB accounts to verify if/when they have uploaded their Form 5 to their HTSB account. If HTSB provides us this access and/or shares with us the names of any candidates who have not uploaded their form, we would be willing to share a copy of the candidates' Form 5 that we collect internally, as well as follow up directly with candidates.

TFA respectfully submits that condition 2 was fully met, and requests that NBI 24–27 be revised to reflect this. TFA looks forward to continuing to partner with HTSB to ensure that Form 5s are uploaded prior to being issued a license.

Condition 3: Completion of Clinical Experience Hours

All TFA's teacher candidates shall be audited annually for the next three (3) years.

TFA met condition 3 by amicably working with HTSB to provide all requested information for the audit. All TFA teachers recommended for licensure completed the Praxis exam before beginning clinical hours and did complete the required 450 hours of clinical experience in the recommended license field.

TFA responds to the issues noted in NBI 24–27 as follows:

- It is noted that 9 completers were in different teaching lines. TFA respectfully submits that this is not accurate, as the table provided clearly shows that these 9 candidates were teaching an instructional line in the aligned licensure field in which they were recommended. A few schools have candidates in split lines in order to meet the diverse needs of schools; however, TFA only counts hours in the subject area for which candidates are seeking a license when counting the 450-hour requirement and school principals have signed letters verifying the teacher candidates' clinical experience in the designated teaching field. Further, beginning in school year 25–26, TFA is now using the Helper Helper app to further support tracking of clinical hours for each candidate, as recommended by HTSB.
- It is noted that 1 completer did not send the Praxis score to HTSB. This completer did not apply for a Provisional License and is not employed with the HDOE. TFA shared all completers' Praxis score reports with HTSB staff during the audit showing all completers passed the Praxis exam in the recommended teaching field before starting their clinical experience/student teaching hours, in full compliance with HTSB requirements.

TFA respectfully submits that condition 3 was fully met, and requests that NBI 24–27 be revised to reflect this.

Condition 4: Notification Regarding Special Education Assignments

TFA shall send an annual letter to all school administrator(s) with TFA teacher candidates explaining that TFA teacher candidates are not allowed in Special Education lines in accordance with IDEA Federal Law. This letter shall be sent each year for the entire accreditation term of seven (7) years, or until TFA has an HTSB approved Special Education program. HTSB shall be copied (CC'd) on these annual letters.

TFA met condition 4 by sending letters to all school administrators hosting TFA teacher candidates, clearly stating that TFA candidates may not be placed in Special Education teaching lines. The HTSB Executive Director was copied on these communications, and our candidate tracking system also reflects this compliance.

Summary

TFA has fully complied with all conditions and respectfully requests that NBI 24–27 be revised to reflect that all four conditions have been met in full. We also propose the following process improvements for future years based on current learnings:

- Adjust the data submission due date from July 31 to October 1, to align with HDOE reporting timelines
- Permit HTSB staff to share with TFA the names of any candidates who have not uploaded Form 5s to their HTSB account so that TFA can provide the Form 5 and follow up with the candidate

We welcome opportunities to collaborate ongoing. Mahalo for your time, attention, and dedication to maintaining high standards for all educator preparation programs.

With appreciation,

Jill Baldemor
Executive Director
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