

[EXTERNAL] Testimony on NBI 23-13

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To:HTSB <htsb@hawaii.gov>

Aloha,

I am submitting testimony for the following:

Meeting: General Business Meeting

Meeting: Teacher Education Committee Meeting

Agenda Item: NBI 23-13

Position: Comment

I am Grace Brown, a Graduate Student and Teaching Assistant at UH Mānoa. I was a 2020 TFA-HI corps member and I taught special education, earning licensure in elementary education and special education through my corps experience at my alma mater, Hōnaunau Elementary. I was also taught by TFA-HI teachers as a HIDOE student at Konawaena Middle and High School.

I am writing to express my support for 7 years of state approval without additional conditions for TFA-HI's teacher preparation program. I have several unique lenses on why TFA deserves this. First, I was a HIDOE student K-12 and had TFA-HI teachers growing up. These were the people that stuck out to me, that expanded my worldview and self perception. This is because Teach for America is a competitive program, meaning the instructors I had came from incredible schools, with resumes full of interesting experiences. Doing anything to complicate licensure for TFA-HI teachers puts a barrier between HIDOE students and incredible humans being in the classroom, and I think that's an absolute waste of time. Second, during my time as a TFA-HI corps member placed in special education, I earned the licensure that I now have. My fellow corps members did too and have gone on to take on leadership roles and become beloved members of their school communities. Again, why are you putting barriers before people who *want* to be in classrooms and succeed in them? My final perspective, as a graduate student in the department of Educational Foundations at UH Mānoa, might be the most relevant. I am currently studying the issues of educational inequity on a local, national, and global scale full-time. One of the biggest issues Hawai'i faces, as I know you're all well aware, is teacher shortages. Why are you putting so much effort into a resolution that will keep high quality teachers out of schools? What evidence do you have that TFA-HI's presence has done harm to the students of HIDOE? You don't have any; I'm a HIDOE student, teacher, and hopefully one day system changer, and I'm telling you, there are many more important issues you can shift your attention to. Please, approve TFA-HI's teacher prep program for 7 years without extra conditions that will just drive folks away. Complicating this process serves literally no one, especially not the haumana. Our system is broken, and while TFA-HI may not be able to solve that, they are certainly helping. If you had 0 teacher shortages in the state, sure, let's have this conversation. Until that point, HIDOE is in no position to turn away TFA-HI's significant contributions to our educational community.