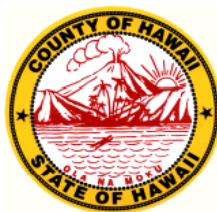


Mitchell D. Roth
Mayor



Lee E. Lord
Managing Director

Robert H. Command
Deputy Managing Director

County of Hawai'i Office of the Mayor

25 Aupuni Street, Suite 2603 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720 • (808) 961-8211 • Fax (808) 961-6553
KONA: 74-5044 Ane Keohokalole Hwy., Bldg C • Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i 96740
(808) 323-4444 • Fax (808) 323-4440

October 25, 2023

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

Re: Testimony | Comment on NBI 23-13: Continuing State Approval for Teach For America's Educator Preparation Unit and Programs for Teacher Education Committee Meeting and General Business Meeting (October 27, 2023)

Aloha Chair Ornelles and Members of the Teacher Education Committee,

I am writing to express my **strong support** for Teach For America (TFA) Hawai'i and their request for continued state approval without conditions or areas of improvement. TFA Hawai'i has played a significant role in our County and State's education system, and I firmly believe that their contributions should be recognized and continued.

TFA Hawai'i has consistently provided our state with qualified teacher candidates and valuable educational services and support. These contributions have positively impacted our schools and communities, especially here on Hawai'i Island. Imposing additional conditions at this juncture would only divert resources and energy away from this essential work.

It is also important to note that TFA Hawai'i has successfully accommodated special education teaching lines in the past, aligning with HTSB's previous interpretations of the policy and passing annual audits. This is a critical gap on our island that, with the help of TFA, could be addressed and narrowed significantly.

In conclusion, Teach For America Hawai'i has been a valuable partner in our County and State's education system, providing qualified teachers and support to our schools. I urge HTSB to grant TFA Hawai'i 7 years of continued state approval without additional conditions, aligning with their national accreditation. This will allow TFA Hawai'i to continue its important work directly impacting our students and teachers.

Mahalo for your consideration and support of this incredible organization.

Mitchell D. Roth
Mayor
County of Hawai'i

[EXTERNAL] Testimony re: NBI 23-13

Kara Kusunoki <kara.kusunoki@gmail.com>

Wed 10/25/2023 6:15 PM

To: HTSB <htsb@hawaii.gov>

Aloha HTSB Team,

My name is Kara Kusunoki. I am a 2009 Teach For America-Hawaii alumna who started my career in education as a middle school teacher with Teach For America and have continued my commitment to serving students in different education-related roles. I currently serve as a director at a national education company that supports struggling learners and I also serve on the Alumni Advisory Board for Teach For America-Hawaii in a voluntary capacity. As I continue to work in the education sector, I see the short and long-term benefits of having Teach For America-Hawaii serve as a teacher preparation program and a mission-driven non-profit organization.

Regarding NBI 23-13, which will be discussed at the Teacher Education Committee Meeting, I would like to share my position. I believe Teach For America is a valuable contributor to the existing Hawaii education system, which includes providing school communities with passionate and committed individuals who provide rigorous educational opportunities to children. The teacher preparation program provided me with ongoing and responsive support for the first two years of my education career, but there were also lasting takeaways that still support my practice today. I believe in the value of the teacher preparation program Teach For America-Hawaii designed and provided. I support seven years of state approval without conditional approval to allow the Teach For America team to focus on operating its teacher preparation program and professional development opportunities. Teach For America-Hawaii has already received from AAQEP, so I am hopeful that since they have already received approval, this will be an easy decision for HTSB to make since they have already been approved for accreditation by a national accreditation body.

Respectfully,

Kara Kusunoki

Teach For America-Hawaii 2009 Alumna

[EXTERNAL] Testimony (Comment on NBI 23-13: Continuing State Approval for Teach For America's Educator Preparation Unit and Programs)

Latasha Davis <davislatasha@hotmail.com>

Wed 10/25/2023 6:38 PM

To:HTSB <htsb@hawaii.gov>

October 25, 2023

Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board
650 Iwilei Road, Suite 268
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96817
htsb@hawaii.gov

Subject: Testimony (Comment on NBI 23-13: Continuing State Approval for Teach For America's Educator Preparation Unit and Programs)

Aloha members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board,

My name is Latasha Davis and I have been part of the Teach For America family since 2017. I taught for 6 years at my placement school in Wahiawa. I am certified in Social Studies and English and started in a Special Education resource line. As a former special education teacher, and now general education teacher, I benefited greatly from their Alternative Route to Certification. I urge the Board to award Teach for America Hawai'i's teacher preparation program 7 years of state approval without conditions.

Teach for America Hawai'i's credential program has provided me with valuable learning and development that has prepared me for the classroom and shaped my leadership. As a person from the continental US, studying at Chaminade and working at a local Title I school helped me become well acquainted with local issues and the unique needs of our population. I continue to be supported by TFA today through opportunities in professional development and continued networking throughout the islands with other educators.

One way I was able to do this is through place-based learning activities. Multiple times throughout the years I was able to participate in Aina-based learning that connected me with local culture past and present. Through service projects at different sites across Oahu, TFA taught me many Hawaiian words, values, and ways of life which supplemented the curriculum I would teach years later: History of the Hawaiian Kingdom. For example, I was able to learn about lo'i kalo and impart that knowledge to the kids at my current school, taking them to a taro patch as well. Because I had many opportunities to learn about the place I'm in and feel connected, I am able to pass that feeling on to the kids: even those who are not from this area originally.

Ultimately, I want the board to understand the huge part TFA Hawai'i plays in helping to recruit and support educators in our local classrooms. Because of the teacher shortage, many teachers come in from out of state. TFA provides a quality program and alternative route to ensure educators have a path to licensure on top of place-based education. Please grant them full state approval without conditions in alignment with the 7-years of approval they have already received from AAQEP.

Sincerely,

Latasha Davis

Latasha Davis

7th Grade Social Studies Teacher, Moanalua Middle School

TFA Hawai'i 2017 Corps Alum

Late Testimony

[EXTERNAL] Testimony Re: NBI 23-13

Leslie Ziu <toy.leslie@gmail.com>

Wed 10/25/2023 6:39 PM

To:HTSB <htsb@hawaii.gov>

Aloha members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board,

My name is Leslie Ziu and I continue to work in the Hawai'i Department of Education with our public schools. In 2012 I began in education as a Teach for America (TFA) corps member and am so grateful to the organization that set me on this lifelong career path to serve our students here in Hawai'i. By pursuing my licensure through TFA, I was able to receive direct classroom coaching, content area training, and rigorous feedback to ensure I would be able to provide needed pedagogical instruction to students. I was also grateful to take courses at Chaminade University of Honolulu through the TFA licensure program to gain even more local context with professors who are experts in the field. I write to strongly advocate for the Hawai'i Teachers Standards Board to award Teach for America Hawai'i's teacher preparation program 7 years of state approval without conditions.

In Hawai'i we continue to have a teacher shortage in our state. We know that our communities have a high cost of living, particularly for those new to an education career. TFA Hawai'i provided me a path to pursue licensure in a way that was supportive, rigorous, and also affordable. I know I remain a proud member of the Hawai'i Department of Education today because of the foundation TFA Hawai'i provided me. I have been able for over a decade to work with students and see our school's state test scores double, mentor new teachers who also continue in the field, and even work as a public school administrator. The doors opened for me through the TFA program cannot be overstated and I in turn seek to continue investing in our public school system.

TFA provides programming that enables caring and hardworking individuals to become teachers from both in and out of state. As an administrator who assists in school hiring, I can attest that we need great teachers as much now as ever before and urge you to support the organizations like TFA seeking to meet this need. I again ask you to grant TFA full state approval without conditions in alignment with the 7-years of approval they have already received from Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation.

Sincerely,

Leslie Ziu

Kapolei High School Assistant Principal

Teach for America 2012 Corps Member

October 24, 2023

Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board
650 Iwilei Road, Suite 268
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96817
htsb@hawaii.gov

Subject: Testimony (Comment on NBI 23-13: Continuing State Approval for Teach For America's Educator Preparation Unit and Programs)

Hola members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board,

My name is Hannah Loera and I am a 2022 Teach for America (TFA) corps member. I am honored to serve as a Special Education Teacher, Care Coordinator and Elemental Excelerator Teaching Fellow. Due to the specialized instruction, training, and mentoring I have received as part of Teach for America, I am strongly encouraging TFA Hawai'i's 7 year approval of our teacher preparation program without conditions.

Teach for America Hawai'i's credential program has supported me through culturally relevant training from esteemed professors, policy leaders and stakeholders, and several nonprofits, in addition to coordinating training through Wai'anae High School, Nānākuli-Wai'anae District, and state level leaders. With TFA's support and direct instruction, I have passed the praxis exams in my content area of Secondary English and Special Education, completed weekly training in content knowledge, curriculum design and lesson planning, and attended professional development and new teacher training through Wai'anae High School. Additionally, TFA has provided over 2,500 minutes of carefully crafted pedagogy throughout the school year dedicated to teaching observations, individual coaching, group coaching, and content-specific data analysis.

Furthermore, I have maintained a 4.0 GPA at our partner university, which requires submitting pacing guides, lesson plans, an eight part culturally relevant portfolio, and quarterly data collection reports and reflections. This includes EDUC 635: Long and Short Range Planning and EDUC 660: SPED Introduction to Exceptional Children from Chaminade University, graduate level courses from a private, accredited university in Honolulu.

This is due in large part to the exceptional one-on-one instruction TFA has provided through quarterly evaluations via observations, lesson-planning, and data analysis. Through consistent, diligent, and dedicated assessments of my progress, I am confident that TFA Hawai'i has provided exemplary preparation for a lifelong mission of pursuing educational equity. In my second year, I have already crafted improved data collection and differentiated materials, which has translated to remarkable growth for my students, including those with Individualized Education Plans.

Teach for America Hawai'i's academic preparation is outstanding in itself, but what has truly impacted my teaching has come from their unique approach to trauma informed teaching, social emotional learning, and culturally relevant pedagogy as a method for improving rigor. Thanks to their emphasis on protecting and caring for the whole child, I am better equipped to recognize

Late Testimony

and meet the needs of a student through their network of experiences. From seating arrangements to behavior support plans, I have implemented a number of relationship building techniques to create a safe and healthy learning environment where a student can not only learn, but thrive.

TFA's mentorship program has also provided extensive community partnerships and service opportunities with local and Native Hawaiian leaders and organizations throughout the island. I have volunteered and learned mo'oleo from Ka'ala Farms, Hoa 'Āina O Mākaha, and E Ala Voyaging Academy, along with scheduled opportunities for Mālama Learning Center and Loko Ea. Through these specific and intentional times with the 'āina and the kumus, I can learn more about the community I teach in from those that know it best.

I have continued to contribute to our Hawai'i public schools during my second year through my work as a Special Education English teacher and a Care Coordinator. This summer, I also reveled in the opportunity to serve as a Teach For America teacher fellow for Elemental Excelerator, a nonprofit based in Honolulu dedicated to championing climate solutions for communities. Through the Teach for America's collaboration with Elemental Excelerator, I served as part of the inaugural cohort of Subject to Climate's Hawai'i Teacher Fellows. Through their support, I craft free, easy-to-access climate science education lessons for teachers with specially designed instruction rooted in Hawaiian environmental justice.

I am also honored to have been selected as a founding mentor for Subject to Climate Hawai'i Teaching Fellows. I now have the opportunity to pay it forward to other teachers who participate in designing curriculum tailored to our communities in Hawai'i. While I still have a lot to learn, I am deeply humbled by the opportunities to grow and help lead others to strengthening our schools and communities.

This knowledge is especially important as I work to incorporate more of Teach for America Hawai'i's #1 long term goal outlined in their strategic plan: building relationships with the community so that our leaders and teachers are deeply interconnected. I have found value in all place-based learning I have participated in, but my heart is especially rooted in Hoa 'Āina ō Makaha. Because of TFA's partnership with the nonprofit educational farm, I consistently volunteer with them to learn more place-based learning strategies, social emotional wellness through environmental interactions, and food sovereignty practices.

In all honesty, I have spent a long time feeling like an outsider. As an LGBTQ+ Latina raised in a low-income household, I am used to navigating new communities and venturing outside my comfort zone. I fully recognize that my culture and background cultivates a very different lived experience than those that I teach. My hope is that by sharing with vulnerability, kindness, and humility, that I can provide students a new perspective of the world, as they have with me.

This does not mean I am "owed a seat at the table," nor am I an expert if I choose to sit among other diverse leaders. My role is the same as everyone's: regardless of our home nations, to advocate for justice so every child, in every classroom, accesses a quality education. I am committed to providing meaningful instruction and relationships to foster multicultural education and advocacy for our schools, with the mission that my current students become the leaders and teachers in their communities.

LATE TESTIMONY

I recognize that my opportunities to help and teach others is one of great privilege. Despite numerous financial, emotional, and familial circumstances, I was blessed with an incredibly hard working family, a safe and involved community, and countless public school teachers who paved the way for me. I was given joyous and highly qualified public educators who were unwavering in their confidence of my success, and resources to pursue academic scholarships and enriching extra-curricular activities. It is because of those teachers, and because of those resources, I chose to pursue public education. I experienced firsthand how a single intervention can change a life. While I may not ever be able to pay back the countless educators who contributed to my success, I hope to honor their memories and legacies by assisting the next generation of leaders and learners in Hawai'i.

When I first received placement through TFA Hawai'i, I was both honored and intimidated by the prospect of moving over 5,000 miles away to a community so different from my own. When Wai'anae High School selected me as a teacher, and then as a special education teacher, I became even more overwhelmed at the daunting task ahead of me. I expected hardships and setbacks, but I was (and still am) constantly amazed by how many school teachers, TFA alumni, and community leaders have worked tirelessly to ensure my success as an educator.

Teach For America- Hawai'i provided a feasible path into the classroom and helped me to build connections to the local community. Being able to become a licensed teacher through my experience as a TFA Hawai'i corps member served as the critical foundation for my long-term journey in education and commitment to Hawai'i keiki through educational policy for special education, low-income students, and family law.

TFA Hawai'i plays a crucial role in helping to recruit and support educators in our local classrooms. TFA provides a quality program and alternative route to ensure educators have a path to licensure, and I urge you to grant them full state approval without conditions in alignment with the 7-years of approval they have already received from AAQEP. Furthermore, as an actual participant in the AAQEP Site Visit in January, I am in the unique position of clarifying my, and other TFA member's experience as a second year teacher. I am in awe of the commitment TFA Hawai'i has demonstrated toward a rigorous teaching curriculum, community partnerships, special education, and social justice for all.

With Aloha and Love,

Hannah Loera

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hannah Loera". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each name being capitalized and prominent.

11th Grade Special Education ELA Teacher, Waianae High School
TFA Hawai'i 2022 Corps Member

LATE TESTIMONY

[EXTERNAL] Comment on NBI 23-13: Continuing State Approval for Teach For America's Educator Preparation Unit and Programs

Ryan Mandado <ryanmandado@gmail.com>

Wed 10/25/2023 9:40 PM

To: HTSB <htsb@hawaii.gov>

Aloha e HTSB,

My name is Dr. Ryan Mandado and I'm the Chief Education Officer (CEO) of DreamHouse 'Ewa Beach Public Charter School. I am in strong support of ensuring TFA's educator program is **approved**. I am a 2015 TFA corps member and started my teaching career at James Campbell High School as a Special Education teacher. The reason I am supporting this measure is because I believe TFA's teacher preparation program centers equity and access mindset(s) that truly are liberatory for Hawai'i's children. Here are the main highlights for how their preparation program contributes to equitable outcomes for students:

Focus on Racial Equity

From the start of the program, TFA centered the importance of being a culturally relevant practitioner. Prior to learning about solid evidence-based pedagogical practice, all corps members developed mindsets that furthered Dr. Gladson-Billing's research on culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP): high academic achievement, cultural competence, and socio-political & cultural consciousness. These three buckets assisted me in ensuring I centered the needs of my students and their communities especially elevating racial equity conversations in support of Native Hawaiian students. All the lesson plans we needed to submit to our credentialing programs required connections to CRP and how it would transform our education practices.

Focus on Instructional Equity

It was expected that all students were to teach students with a diverse range of learning needs. Our training included universal design elements for learning for all lessons. In the program, we learned the importance of strong general education practices so our students with exceptionalities had access to inclusive learning experiences that addressed their needs. Just like CRP, all lesson plans submitted needed to have elements of UDL built into lessons.

Continuous Development

TFA has a strong alumni network that continues professional development experiences for corps members. Here are the programs I have been involved with in the TFA network that contributed to my continued effort to transform public education:

Rural School Leadership Academy - a fellowship to improve educational outcomes for students in rural communities

National Aspiring Principals Fellowship - a fellowship focused on school leadership and provided me a principal certification

Leadership for Educational Equity - a policy focused program that helped me improve my advocacy and policy skills that contributed to my election the youngest HSTA board member

My most prized accomplishment is starting DreamHouse 'Ewa Beach Public Charter School - Hawai'i's newest and fastest growing charter school in the state of Hawai'i. This successful charter school was started by TFA alumni who care about transforming education in Hawai'i. I could not accomplish the

huge task of starting a school without the resources and support from my TFA network. Our school continues to hire TFA alumni who commit to more than two years of educational practice in our state.

Overall, I am in strong support of approving TFA's educator program. I am a model and product of the excellent programming TFA has for local students who want to become educators.

Thank you for letting me share my story. Please invest in TFA.

Mahalo,
Dr. Ryan Mandado

--

Ryan C. Mandado, Ed.D

He/Him/His

Late Testimony



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

Aloha e Chair and Members of the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board,

I am writing to support NBI 23-13, the conditional approval of TFA as an educational provider. I frankly think this measure is far too generous, and that we should not be approving incompetent providers, but I also believe in giving people space to learn. As the State House representative for HD 46, which includes five schools that recently had TFA Corp members placed in Special Education positions, I watched TFA leadership and former members try to deny that they understood IDEA and its requirements. The law is clear. All told, there were forty-seven TFA Corp members who had been placed in Special Education positions in Title I schools across Oahu and Moku o Keawe last year, but the placements dating back to 2013 number in the hundreds. I am deeply concerned that current practices regarding teacher preparation and practicum placement that have been allowed to obtain in Hawai'i since at least 2013 are in violation of federal law and contrary to the interests of our students with special needs.

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) law specifically addresses the issue of classroom teachers not certified in Special Education. This is permissible only if the teacher is participating in an alternate route to special education certification program. TFA does not have an approved program in Special Education, so their teacher candidates are out of compliance because they are not participating in an alternative route to special education certification. As long as this is true, Teach For America Corp members should not be able to be hired in Special Education settings.

The state has invested tens of millions of dollars since the early 2000s in this failed model of teacher recruitment, with the short service time (two years) contributing to constant churn and instability in our public schools, especially in our hardest to staff Title I schools. While there may be a few exceptions to the rule of rapid turnover, the overall pattern does a tremendous disservice to our children. And the parents of students with special needs will be livid when they discover that so many of their children's Special Education teachers were receiving no pedagogical instruction in their licensure process that could have helped them become more effective in working with their children.

Josh Heimowitz, Senior Managing Director External Network, in his efforts to mobilize opposition to holding TFA accountable for negligent practices, is keenly aware of the systemic dependency TFA has successfully created in Hawai'i. He has been extolling people in positions of public decision-making authority to submit testimony to remind you, the HTSB Board, that TFA Special Education teachers are a critical pipeline of teachers for the HDOE. There is a shortage of Special Education teachers in Hawai'i and schools have relied on TFA to help fill this hard to fill position. If unable to hire TFA teachers in SpED lines, this could have a detrimental impact on schools and students, many of whom would likely have to fill these positions with long-term substitute teachers. That is a manufactured dependency, one that has been incredibly lucrative for TFA, a "nonprofit" that reported net assets of \$500 million in 2022. Our state's budgeted contract with TFA for the coming year perpetuates our dependency at the expense to the state of an additional \$1.6 million. This insanity needs to end. The HTSB is uniquely positioned to check and ultimately end our dependency on providers of shoddy, fly-by-night teacher preparation programs and failed teacher recruitment programs, and ensure that all of our students, especially the most vulnerable, are taught by highly qualified teachers. Your role as the HTSB is to maintain high levels of teacher quality, because our kids deserve better.

Mahalo,

Amy Perruso

[EXTERNAL] Testimony on NBI 23-13

Grace Brown <grace.brown.20@tfacorps.org>

Thu 10/26/2023 3:51 PM

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.