



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Hale o nā Luna Makaʻāinana

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE CAPITOL
415 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

May 23, 2023

HAWAII TEACHER STANDARDS BOARD GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING

TESTIMONY SUBJECT: Action Item IV, A, NBI 22-102 Student Teaching Policy Regarding Teach for America Candidates

POSITION: Support.

FROM: Rep. Jeanné Kapela, Hawai'i State House of Representatives

I am writing in support of Action Item IV, A, NBI 22-102 Student Teaching Policy Regarding Teach for America (TfA) Candidates. Hawai'i's students deserve to be taught by qualified, well-trained teachers. Special needs students are our most vulnerable children and should be given the most effective support we can provide.

Teach for America does not currently have a special education teacher training program. Yet, TfA participants are being placed in special education classrooms (a total of 47 TfA candidates are in special education settings this year). **This practice compromises the learning growth of special needs children and federal law**, which requires that special education students be given a free and appropriate education led by a licensed special education teacher. Since TfA does not—and should not be given the authority—to facilitate a special education training program, their participants cannot fulfill federal special education requirements.

I understand concerns about how the proposed change may impact current TfA members who are facilitating special education. To respect the teaching contracts under which these individuals were hired, it may be necessary to state that the proposed change to the student teaching policy will only apply to future school years. Additionally, I believe that a possible structural fix for this problem would be to require incoming TfA candidates to register for special education teacher preparedness programs. TfA members are considered “emergency hires” and, by rule, emergency hires must be working to obtain the professional certifications required for their fields within three years.

Requiring TfA candidates to pursue (and subsequently complete) special education licensure programs would allow them to meet the legal demands for guiding the learning processes of special needs students. Again, though, we should not allow TfA to manage a special education training program. It does not have the capacity or expertise

to facilitate such a program. Moreover, the skills necessary to teach special education cannot be learned via the TfA model, which provides minimal pre-classroom teacher preparation and, instead, relies heavily on absorbing on-the-job experience.

Finally, I want to note that schools in many of Hawai'i's low-income and hard-to-staff areas can address their special education teacher shortage problems through the differential pay increases that were negotiated by the Hawai'i State Teachers Association and funded by the State Legislature. The Hawai'i Department of Education, in collaboration with HSTA, implemented differential pay increases during the 2019-2020 school year to reduce teacher shortages in special education, hard-to-staff, and Hawaiian immersion teaching positions. Instituting differential pay increases led to significant progress in reducing longstanding teacher shortages in high-demand areas.

Departmental data shows that the percentage of special education teacher vacancies dropped by 45 percent during the 2020-2021 school year, **with 43 percent more teachers choosing to move into a special education teaching line than the year before.** The number of teachers choosing to work in hard-to-fill positions in rural or remote areas increased by 52 percent over the same period, while the number of Hawaiian immersion teachers increased by 7 percent. Put simply, teachers are willing to work in more challenging areas if we pay them well. I urge HTSB to continue working with HSTA and the DOE to advertise the differential pay increases and other incentives that exist for schools with critical special education teacher shortages.

We have a responsibility to give the best instruction possible to our most vulnerable children. Please ensure that special needs students are given access to high-quality, fully prepared, effective educators, not people who are learning the challenges of meeting individualized education programs and managing developmental hardship on the fly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeanné Kapela". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Jeanné Kapela (District 5)

May 21, 2023

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

Re: Comment on NBI 22-102 (Student Teaching Policy Regarding Teach For America Candidates)

Aloha e Members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board,

My name is Sierra Callihan and I currently serve as a coach for Teach For America Hawai'i's first- and second-year corps members. While I am writing to proudly comment on the competency, passion, and unwavering commitment those I coach bring to this work, I am also writing to honor the stories of impact that Teach For America (TFA) Hawai'i has had on the past decade of my life. I am writing as a former student of TFA Hawai'i corps members and alumni – at 'Aiea Intermediate School, 'Aiea High School, and UH Mānoa – as a corps member who taught 10th grade English at Wai'anae High School as the Special Education Teacher, and as an alumni who is part of an incredible network of over 400 driven individuals in Hawai'i.

Following my K-12 education, I was no stranger to the brain drain that plagued our communities in the early 2010's. Convinced that I needed to leave Hawai'i, but unable to afford to do so, I made the promise to myself that I would find a job on the continent that would warrant the claim that, "I had made it." It was not until I heard of TFA Hawai'i that I realized the opportunity in front of me to stay home and serve students – to ensure that, regardless of ability or background, they would know that they are deserving of an equitable education and should be proud to call Hawai'i, "home."

As a 2017 corps member, I had the privilege of teaching 10th grade English Language Arts at Wai'anae High School as the Special Education Teacher. Following a rigorous summer Practicum experience that introduced fundamentals including, but not limited to, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Common Core State Standards, learning objectives and backwards design, and Special Education laws and services, I continued to receive training and support through TFA Hawai'i, Wai'anae High School, and the Hawai'i Department of Education. I attended daily course-alike meetings, during which I interacted with and assessed rigorous English Language Arts curriculum in collaboration with both general education and special education teachers, attended biweekly Special Education meetings and trainings, and engaged with additional Complex Area and State-facilitated professional development opportunities.

Throughout my first year in the corps, my TFA Hawai'i coach and school-based mentors played an integral role in my development through monthly informal observations and quarterly formal observation cycles, ongoing support and thought-partnership to assist with classroom instruction and delivery of Hawai'i State Standards, and provision of resources for and support on University coursework required for licensure. In addition to the preceding development opportunities, my mentors also challenged me to incorporate the HĀ Framework, Social Emotional Learning, and Social Justice standards within my classroom to ensure students were receiving a holistic education that was inclusive of the accommodations and supports they were guaranteed by law.

By the ending of my first year as a Special Education teacher, on top of fulfilling licensure requirements outlined by the HTSB, I had redesigned parts of the 10th grade ELA curriculum, which continued to be utilized across all settings for the following years, received an average rating of Proficient on my EES observations by administrators, and saw anywhere from one to four grade-levels of growth in Lexile scores for my students. I

rightfully received my teaching license in the content area I taught, as did the corps members in SPED roles throughout the years before and following my corps year. I took the Special Education Praxis II exam soon thereafter to ensure that I would be highly qualified to not only deliver appropriate subject area and grade-level general education curriculum, but also continue implementing services and support to the students who had Individualized Education Plans within my classroom.

The work that I have spoken to thus far was not only true for me; the drive and excellence that has been required of TFA Hawai'i corps members continues to be met by our current corps members in Special Education roles today. As a coach, I have been humbled by our corps members' unwavering dedication to providing a rigorous education to their students, which necessitates that they fulfill and excel in all licensure requirements outlined by the HTSB. They have therefore spent the past ten months demonstrating content knowledge via Praxis II passage, meeting the required 450 hours of clinical teaching experience, receiving excellent marks in their University licensure courses, and delving deep into the culture and practices of Hawai'i. Throughout each and every quarterly formal observation cycle I have conducted, I have seen evidence of their excellence and thorough understanding of both subject matter and Special Education accommodations provided to students.

Their passion, innovative ideas, and robust understanding of their subject areas are inspiring, and they make me excited for the future of education in Hawai'i. Similar to how TFA Hawai'i provided me an opportunity to stay home to serve the communities that raised me, there are other licensure candidates who have currently spent the last year teaching at their alma maters, and those who stayed home specifically to fulfill their goals of giving back to Hawai'i. For those who are new to our islands, I have seen nothing short of an unwavering commitment to learning about and teaching to the unique stories and needs of our students. To continue the work they have begun – work that our students need – they must receive their teaching licenses, which they have earned.

In education, there are many narratives that we have grown accustomed to – the brain drain, lack of support given to students with disabilities, and the teacher turnover that schools and communities must wrestle with year after year. As a former student and member of, and current alumni and coach in, Teach For America Hawai'i, I can confidently attest to the work our corps members are doing to shift those narratives through competency, subject area expertise, indigeneity, and service. Continuing the decade of precedent in licensure requirements for our special education teachers is of utmost importance to ensure these dedicated individuals can continue building upon the work they, their colleagues, and communities have already begun.

As I write this comment, I cannot help but to think about my seventh grade self, my former students, and the students who have been taught by our licensure candidates in special education roles, as these are the individuals who ultimately answer for the decisions made by adults. I urge you, the members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board, to acknowledge the decisions our first-year corps members have made every single day – to show up for students, to learn and demonstrate understanding of subject area content, to elevate students' identities and stories, and to work towards a better, more equitable future for Hawai'i.

Mahalo nui loa,

Sierra Callihan



Manager, Teach For America Hawai'i
2017 Alumni, Teach For America Hawai'i

[EXTERNAL] TESTIMONY (Comment on NBI 22-102- Student Teaching Policy Regarding Teach For America Candidates)

Jenna Moriwaki <jennaam@hawaii.edu>

Mon 5/22/2023 4:00 PM

To: HTSB <htsb@hawaii.gov>

Cc: jemowa@bu.edu <jemowa@bu.edu>

EMAIL: htsb@hawaii.gov

SUBJECT: TESTIMONY (Comment on NBI 22-102- Student Teaching Policy Regarding Teach For America Candidates)

May 22, 2023

Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board

650 Iwilei Road, Suite 268

Honolulu, Hawai'i 96817

Meeting: Hawaii Teacher Standards Board General Business Meeting on May 23, 2023

Agenda Item: NBI 22-102 Student Teaching Policy Regarding Teach For America Candidates

Position: Comment

Aloha members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board,

I have experience as a classroom teacher for over 8 years. I have taught grades K all the way to 12. I have taught in special education settings from "Resource" (small class size usually less than 12, all students receiving special education services), "Inclusion" (general education class with some students receiving special education services), to general education (no students with special education services). I have also worked as a lecturer, facilitator, and teacher coach for 5 years through Teach for America.

The proposed decision to prevent TFA teachers from getting licensure in Special Education is **harmful to students and teachers because it is unrealistic and critically misinformed.**

Denying licensure for these TFA teacher and proposing to change the requirements of special education teachers from TFA is unrealistic. BE FOR REAL. There is a shortage of teachers on the island, the greatest shortage is in special education. Why? Because of the hardships of the additional legal duties and responsibilities that special education teachers undertake for very little compensation. This proposal does not address any of the underlying issues that are causing this unacceptable situation for students and teachers. Instead, this proposal further puts the squeeze on teachers and discourages people from entering special education and teaching in general.

If HTSB wants teachers to jump through additional hoops, it should apply to future teachers; not teachers who have already taught all this time and completed all these trainings in the honest belief that they would receive licensure from HTSB when they never would have started the school year if they had known they wouldn't get this licensure as promised.

Furthermore, if HTSB wanted teachers to jump through more hoops for special education - with what money? Be for real. I am a proud public school graduate. I'm local, born and raised here. I would not have been able to return to the classroom as a teacher without the financial support that TFA Hawaii provided me by helping me obtain a grant for licensure and my Master's degree. I was supported by TFA in pursuing my Master's in Educational Studies from Johns Hopkins University (JHU) with a focus on secondary education and special education. While a student at JHU, I also took a course at the JHU law school called Education Law. My school provided training on how to write Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and how to use the computer systems for IEPs. TFA provided me with the bulk of support in learning how to effectively deliver content and how to actually teach English to students in a way the students could understand and excel in. Later, the DOE denied my application to "class up" for a pay raise because they said that Education Law is not necessary for classroom teachers and is only something that school administrators need. Now HTSB is trying to say that TFA teachers need this type of legal training. So I am an example of a teacher who *did* jump through additional hoops and for nothing. Because I was denied this pay increase, I have a masters degree, but do not have enough money to live in this very expensive state. That was the start of me planning to leave the classroom. Be for real, HTSB. There's not enough money paid to teachers and teacher candidates now and you are saying you want to squeeze teachers even more.

This proposal critically misunderstands special education under the IDEA. The Supreme Court of the United States has determined that Students who receive special education services are entitled an educational benefit that is more than "*de minimis*." The educational benefit that students receive from teachers and schools is not in special education. Special education is not something that students learn. Special education is a "setting" or "learning environment" where students are supported in learning content (math, science, English, etc.) and mastery of the content area is the benefit that students are entitled to.

[NBI 22-102](#) says "in the role of Special Education teachers". I was never a teacher who taught Special Education. What even is that? I taught English language arts. The summer before I started in the classroom, I passed the PRAXIS for both ELA and science. The school that hired me originally hired me to teach History and then switched me to ELA in the special education resource setting. I was still an English teacher who had passed the PRAXIS, but I also took and passed the PRAXIS for special education in August 2013. The "Environment" level that I taught ELA in was "special education inclusion" and "special education resource" settings. All diploma-track students must learn content. A special education teacher is not off the hook for lesson planning and delivering content just because they also have to manage IEPs. However, this proposal would deny a teacher like me licensure – I do not understand why, despite reading the entire proposal.

When I was a teacher, I thoughtfully planned English language arts lessons that were fun and meaningful. I tried to make sure that students got many chances to attack the same skill so that they would build confidence and achieve mastery of reading and writing. While planning and executing these English lessons, I also folded in special education supports and continually considered my approach to teaching content to ensure that my students could most effectively access my lessons. This sometimes looked like making prints in 18 point font for students with visual impairments, or sometimes looked like seating students strategically to minimize distractions for a student with ADHD or emotional disability. And there

were countless other individualized ways that I ensured my students could access the content I was teaching – English. In addition to teaching English while using special education best practices, after classes were over, I had to run around to other teachers’ classrooms to ensure that they were keeping up with IEP-mandated special education duties, make sure that my students to whom I was care-coordinator were receiving their IEP-mandated supports and were making progress in learning each content area, and write IEPs and hold meetings with stakeholders.

I found teaching while being a special education care-coordinator to be difficult compared to when I was a general education teacher with no care-coordinator duties. Teachers who are special education care-coordinators have legal duties that they must fulfill in addition to delivering instruction in a content area. There are also real legal consequences to not fulfilling these duties. Denying teachers licensure because they are supported by Teach for America is perpetuating a harmful stereotype for special education that students who receive special education services are somehow “learning to be special ed.” When in actuality, students are supported in learning a content, like English, while being supported with individualized special education techniques, methods, and learning environments.

Denying licensure harms these teachers who were promised licensure under the old standards. Most of these teachers would not have voluntarily undertaken the legal duties required by special education if they did not believe they would be licensed by HTSB under HTSB’s current standards for licensure. Were a person to teach special education without the reward of licensure, that would mean they would be agreeing to open themselves up to a ton of additional duties and responsibilities with real consequences in exchange for nothing! These teachers believed and counted on HTSB’s promise and were carrying out their duties under this belief. For the entirety of the school year, HTSB was completely aware that these TFA teachers were working toward licensure and fulfilling their duties with the belief that they were going to obtain licensure upon completion of the current HTSB requirements. At this point, **denying licensure would be a real swindle, bait-and-switch, scammer fraudster type action against these teachers.**

Sincerely,

Jenna Moriwaki

TFA Hawai‘i (2013) Corps Member, (Wai‘anae High School)