

October 20, 2023

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

**Subject:** Testimony New Business Item 23-13

Aloha members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board,

My name is Scott Hamilton and I am a 2015 Teach For America (TFA) alumni and I currently am a vice principal. I am writing to share why I feel strongly that Teach for America Hawai'i's teacher preparation program should be awarded 7 years of state approval.

TFA Hawai'i has provided me with valuable learning and professional development that has prepared me for the classroom and shaped my leadership. I completed a traditional teacher preparation program during my undergraduate studies, but felt that TFA better equipped me to be an effective teacher and leader. I quickly developed my instructional capacity through TFA's various experiences like summer institute, meaningful coaching, and professional development. I continue to be supported by TFA today. This is currently my ninth year in the Hawai'i Department of Education (HIDOE). I have been in multiple roles such as a general education teacher, academic coach, and now vice principal.

I did not get alternatively licensed through TFA Hawai'i's credentialing route, but I observed how it was impactful for all of the other corps members I served with. I am confident that my colleagues that became licensed teachers through TFA Hawai'i received a critical foundation to provide an excellent education for all students.

I want to highlight the vital role TFA Hawai'i plays 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 in alignment with the 7-years of approval they have already received from AAQEP.

Sincerely,  
Scott Hamilton

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Hamilton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vice Principal, Wheeler Middle School  
TFA Hawai'i 2015 Alumni

OCTOBER 20TH, 2023

HAWAII TEACHER STANDARDS BOARD  
650 IWILEI ROAD, SUITE 268  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 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 *HAWAII TEACHER STANDARDS BOARD*,

MY NAME IS CHARLES M. CLAUSNER AND I AM A 2015 *TEACH FOR AMERICA - HAWAII* ALUM AND I AM CURRENTLY THE 7TH GRADE MATH TEACHER AT *SAINT LOUIS SCHOOL* HERE ON O'AHU. I AM WRITING TO SHARE WHY I FEEL STRONGLY THAT *TEACH FOR AMERICA HAWAII'S* TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM SHOULD BE AWARDED 7 YEARS OF STATE APPROVAL WITHOUT CONDITIONS.

*TEACH FOR AMERICA HAWAII* IS LED BY INCREDIBLE HUMANS LEADING THE CHARGE TOWARDS EDUCATIONAL EQUITY. *TFA* GAVE ME A CHANCE TO CONNECT TO HAWAIIAN SCHOOLS AND EMPOWER YOUTH TOWARDS THEIR HIGHEST POTENTIAL. THIS WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITH *TFA*.

I HAVE WORKED IN HAWAII'S SCHOOLS FOR NINE YEARS NOW, LEAD A MATH DEPARTMENT, AM THE MATH COACH, AND AM A CURRICULAR COACH. *TFA* CONTINUES TO SUPPORT MY DEVELOPMENT AS A LEADER IN THE EDUCATIONAL SPACE. *TFA* IS COMMITTED TO EDUCATING AND EMPOWERING POLICIES AND PEOPLE THAT WILL FIGHT FOR WHAT IS RIGHT IN HAWAII. I AM HONORED TO CONTINUE THE FIGHT FORWARD WITH *TFA* IN MY CORNER. WE NEED GREAT AND COMMITTED LEADERS TO HAWAII'S EDUCATIONAL SPACES AND *TFA* OFFERS THIS AND SO MUCH MORE TO OUR COMMUNITIES.

IN CLOSING, I WANT TO REITERATE THE IMPORTANT ROLE *TFA HAWAII* PLAYS 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.

SINCERELY,  
CHARLES M. CLAUSNER

7TH GRADE MATH TEACHER - SAINT LOUIS SCHOOL  
TFA HAWAII 2015 CORPS ALUM  
*UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII @ MANOA - DOCTORAL CANDIDATE - 2026*  
*CHAMINADE UNIVERSITY - MBA - 2021*  
*JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY - MSED - 2017*  
*CORNELL UNIVERSITY - BSILR - 2013*

October 10, 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)  
Meeting: General Business Meeting

Aloha members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board,

My name is Cara Muraoka and I am a 2017 Teach For America alum. I am currently the Grade Level Chair for Fourth Grade at Mānoa Elementary School. I am writing to share why I feel strongly that Teach for America Hawai'i's teacher preparation program should be awarded 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. I had four coaches and mentors connected to TFA in my first two years at my placement school, Nānāikapono Elementary. My coaches gave me specific advice and support through regularly scheduled observations and meetings, during which they challenged me to reflect deeply on the lesson observations and gave me action steps to follow through on before the next meeting. Two of my coaches worked at my placement school, and I could rely on them to help me at any time. They provided me with support in collecting and analyzing data and using differentiation strategies for the diverse learning needs of my class. Since then, I have assisted many other teachers in creating data sheets, reflecting on the results, and implementing differentiation strategies. Through TFA's connections, I was able to afford and pursue a Master's of Science of Education at the same time as my service, which gave me immediately applicable professional development. By the second half of the school year, I went from an Emergency Hire teacher without any solo classroom experience to having student test scores at the same proficiency as the veteran teachers. TFA taught me the mindsets and practice of having an inclusive classroom and rigorous hands-on, minds-on instruction. I continue to be supported by TFA today through opportunities for community networking, professional development, and applications for grants.

I have continued to contribute to our Hawai'i public schools for over 6 years. I have supported new hires, implemented project-based learning, and hosted after-school clubs even through distance-learning. As one of the teachers sent to a PBL workshop in 2018, I returned to Nānāikapono and immediately began implementation of a large-scale mural project on the cafeteria stage wall that the students researched, designed, and painted themselves in my second year in the classroom. It incorporates their pride in their home and presents the words for the school alma mater. I started an after school club to paint more murals in 2020 so that the students could still feel connected to school during distance learning, and although I moved from my initial placement school the following school year, the leftover paint from the grant that the

students and I received has since been used to create another legacy mural in the school driveway with 808Urban in 2022. I have continued to guide students in mural creation at Mānoa Elementary through PBL. Also, every class in my grade level successfully completed two separate science and social studies-focused PBL units last year, one of which I drafted for us on my own time. Without TFA's continuous coaching and support, I would not have had the daring and confidence to implement PBL on my own as a second year teacher, which gave me the experience to support my new grade level in PBL now. As I make my way through my seventh year in the classroom, I am taking on the role of Grade Level Chair as the most experienced in years in the grade level. I am guiding the two new hires through data collection and analysis, while planning field trips and projects that Mānoa Elementary has not done since before the pandemic and since before I moved to this school. TFA gave me the foundation to have confidence in the process and to take uncertainty as the courageous path to making a difference.

Teach For America- Hawai'i provided a feasible pathway for me to be an educator here. With a newborn baby in 2016, I could not have afforded to return to school to become a teacher. TFA's program gave me the opportunity to start working full-time toward my licensure, receive health benefits and pay to support myself and my daughter, and receive my Master's of Science in Education at the same time. Having grown up in Hawai'i, I am deeply committed to working towards educational equity in my home community. Through my placement school, TFA's support and training, and enrollment in the Johns Hopkins Master's of Science in Education program, I grew quickly as an educator that could understand and support my students' social-emotional and academic needs. Being able to become a licensed teacher through my experience as a TFA Hawai'i corps member served as the critical foundation for my journey in what has become and will continue to be a life-long career in education.

In closing, I want to reiterate the important role TFA Hawai'i plays 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 in alignment with the 7-years of approval they have already received from AAQEP.

Sincerely,

Cara Muraoka

*Cara Muraoka*

4th Grade Teacher, Mānoa Elementary

TFA Hawai'i 2017 Corps Alum

## [EXTERNAL] Testimony

Kala Aukai <kaaukai@ksbe.edu>

Sat 10/21/2023 9:46 PM

To:HTSB <htsb@hawaii.gov>

Aloha,

My name is Kalāhikiola Aukai, and I am a seventh grade ELA teacher at Kamehameha Schools-Kapālama. Below is the information for my testimony (I forgot to copy/paste my testimony in my previous email):

Meeting: Teacher Education Committee Meeting

Meeting: General Business Meeting

Agenda Item NBI 23 13

Position: Comment

October 21, 2023

Hawai'i Teacher Standard Board

650 Iwilei Road, Suite 268

Honolulu, Hawai'i 96817

[htsb@hawaii.gov](mailto:htsb@hawaii.gov)

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

Aloha member of the Hawai'i Teacher Standard Board,

My name is Kalāhikiola Aukai. I am a 2015 Teach For America corps member/alum and currently teach at Kamehameha Schools-Kapālama as a seventh grade English teacher. I am writing to share why I feel strongly that **Teach for America Hawai'i's teacher preparation program should be awarded seven 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. I was able to immediately enter a classroom with their support and was able to teach in a high need community. Although I was there to influence students' lives, they were able to influence my professional and personal life for the better. I still cannot believe how quickly I was able to become a teacher, but it has built me into the person I am today, so I am forever grateful to TFA for the platform they provided me. I am also thankful for the Master's in Education degree that TFA mostly financed, which was a blessing since the program helped me advance my own education.

I have continued to contribute to our Hawai'i school for over nine years through my work as a middle school English educator. Although I began my career at Wai'anae Intermediate School with TFA then transferred to Niu Valley Middle School, I currently teach at Kamehameha. I have been able to achieve National Board Certification and am currently pursuing my doctorate in education. With TFA offering me my first job post college, I have been able to positively impact hundreds of students, and I am glad they chose me to be a corps member.

Teach For America Hawai'i provided a feasible pathway for me to be an educator here at home. Having grown up in Hawai'i, I am deeply committed to working toward educational equity in my home 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 journey in what has become and will continue to be a lifelong career in education.

In closing, I want to reiterate the important role TFA Hawai'i plays in helping to recruit and support educators in our local classroom. TFA provides a quality program and alternative route to ensure

educator have a path to licensure, and I urge you to grant them full state approval without condition in alignment with the seven years of approval they have already received from AAQEP.

Sincerely,  
Kalāhikiola Aukai

*Kalā Aukai*

7th Grade ELA Teacher, Kamehameha Schools-Kapālama

TFA Hawai'i 2015 Corp Member/Alum

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October 22, 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 Taylor Hamilton and I was born and raised in Nu'uuanu, I am a 2013 Teach For America corps member and alum, and I am in my 11th year of teaching and am currently an Academy Math Teacher at Punahou School. I began my teaching career with Teach For America at James Campbell High School and taught there for 5 years. I am also a 3rd generation teacher and my grandmother taught at Kalihi Kai Elementary for 35 years and my mom at Salt Lake & Moanalua Elementary for 13 years. Overall, I feel very connected to our public school communities and feel that I offer great perspective when it comes to education here in Hawai'i. Overall, I am writing to share why I strongly feel that **Teach for America Hawai'i's teacher preparation program should be awarded 7 years of state approval without conditions.**

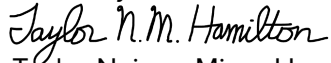
The TFA teacher preparation program was honestly the perfect way for me to get into the field of education, begin my teaching career, and authentically get the mentorship, feedback, and support I needed to flourish as a teacher. I am someone who signed up for this program because I wanted to be a teacher just like my grandmother and my mom and I honestly feel that this program prepared me more than other pathways that my friends did to also become teachers. This program helped me by accelerating my credential while making sure to mentor me in key points of how to be a great teacher like lesson planning, being grounded to community, working together with colleagues and families, and how to be a leader within my classroom and beyond.

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. One of the things that was most meaningful to me was how much I was cared for by the TFA staff who would observe my classroom, leave me authentic feedback, and work together to keep improving and growing as a beginning teacher. Overall, I continue to be supported by TFA today through their alumni programming that I try to engage with from time to time which has included informal talk stories, affinity group meetings for those of us who identify as Native Hawaiian, and opportunities to stay grounded and engage within our communities.

Overall, I have truly had an amazing career as a teacher so far and it is because of the TFA program. Teach For America- Hawai'i provided a feasible pathway for me to be an educator here at home. Having grown up in Hawai'i, I am deeply committed to working towards educational equity in my home 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 journey in what has become and will continue to be a life-long career in education.

In closing, I want to reiterate the important role TFA Hawai'i plays 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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Taylor N. M. Hamilton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Taylor Nainoa Miura Hamilton

Academy Math Teacher, Punahou School

TFA Hawai'i 2013 Corps Member/Alum

October 23, 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 Sarah Kern and I am a 2013 Teach For America alum and I am currently an instructional coach at Chiefess Kamakahalei Middle School (CKMS) on Kaua'i. I am writing to share why I feel strongly that **Teach for America Hawai'i's teacher preparation program should be awarded 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. Through the credentialing program I learned about what it meant to be a culturally responsive teacher who regularly embraces students' backgrounds, skills, and experiences in order to enhance instruction. The program was also helpful in building my knowledge about what it means to be a general education teacher in an inclusion classroom and what my role is as a general education teacher in an individual education plan (IEP) meeting. In January 2016, following my two years as a TFA corps member, I was awarded the Teacher of Promise Award by the National Milken Educators of Hawai'i. This award was presented to me by my school's administration because I demonstrated strong relationship-building, effective pedagogical strategies, and overall best-practices in the classroom, many of which I learned about through TFA Hawai'i's credential program from 2013-2015.

I continue to be supported by TFA today through the alumni network which offers events virtually so that I can continue to stay connected even from another island. The broader TFA Hawai'i network is also extremely supportive in everything from sharing resources to submitting legislative testimony for important causes. I worked hard alongside another TFA alum to advocate for legislation that beginning in 2022 required all DOE schools to provide menstrual products to students free of charge. TFA corps members and alumni were some of the most supportive members of the community, with dozens of them testifying in support of the bill.

I have worked in our Hawai'i public schools for over 10 years through my work at Wai'anae High School (2013-2018) and CKMS where I have been able to have a positive impact on the hundreds of students who were in my classroom learning math and science. I have stayed in touch with many of my former students and am proud to say that several of them have chosen to pursue jobs and degrees in medicine and other science-related fields, in part due to their experiences in

my classroom. When I became an instructional coach, my impact broadened as I now work directly with over 60 classroom teachers at my school to improve their instructional practice. This position allows me to reach all 800+ of CKMS' middle school students by conducting classroom observations, giving teachers thoughtful feedback, modeling instructional strategies, supporting teachers with accommodations and modifications for students with IEPs, and more. The TFA teacher preparation program provided me with many of the foundational skills that I am continuing to use and share with my colleagues in my work as a coach.

I have wanted to be a teacher since I was five years old. After college on the mainland, Teach For America- Hawai'i provided a feasible pathway for me to be an educator here at home. Having grown up in Hawai'i, I am deeply committed to working towards educational equity in my home 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 journey in what has become and will continue to be a life-long career in the Hawai'i Department of Education.

In closing, I want to reiterate the important role TFA Hawai'i plays 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.

Sincerely,

Sarah Kern

Instructional Coach, Chiefess Kamakahelei Middle School

TFA Hawai'i 2013 Alum



david.miyashiro@hawaiikidscan.org  
hawaiikidscan.org

David Miyashiro  
Executive Director

October 27, 2023

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

Aloha Board members,

Founded in 2017, HawaiiKidsCAN is a local nonprofit organization committed to ensuring that Hawaii has an excellent and equitable education system that reflects the true voices of our communities and, in turn, has a transformational impact on our children and our state. We strongly believe that all students should have access to excellent educational opportunities, regardless of family income levels and circumstances.

**HawaiiKidsCAN would like to offer comments for New Business Item 23-13: Continuing State Approval for Teach For America's (TFA) Educator Preparation Unit and Programs.**

As both a leader at a local education advocacy non-profit organization and 2008 special education alumnus of the TFA Hawaii program, I strongly recommend that TFA Hawaii's teacher preparation program should be awarded 7 years of state approval without conditions.

TFA Hawaii changed my life. As a fourth generation Hawaii resident, the program provided the pathway for me to come home to Hawaii after finishing up college in Massachusetts and have an immediate way to make an impact. The training I received was rigorous and prepared me to teach special education ELA at Wahiawa Middle School, and the continued coaching was practical and grounded in the realities of the challenges I faced in the classroom as a new teacher. Because many TFA recruits and teachers are driven first and foremost by a passion for education equity, I found we were less daunted by the holistic challenges facing low-income families and the "soft bigotry of low expectations" that unfortunately still persist. This is a critical point that I've found

to be unique to TFA, at least in Hawaii. TFA teachers expect and seek out the most challenging placements in our education system, where teacher shortages are far too common. This desire to work with our most underserved kids and communities is precisely the reason I opted to teach special education while with TFA.

Through the TFA Hawaii network, I've met incredible educators and community leaders, including the recipients of the highest teaching awards, elected officials, and brilliant entrepreneurs. This is personal, as I met my wife through TFA Hawaii and she currently in her 13<sup>th</sup> year of teaching math in the Hawaii public school system. She has pushed her practice through taking on campus leadership roles and applying for National Board Certification.

Taking current cross-sector labor conditions into consideration, it's not accurate to say TFA teachers leave the profession or the area of education at higher rates than other programs. While I'm no longer a classroom teacher, TFA Hawaii has shaped my path so that I've been able to focus on improving student outcomes through the non-profit and government sectors. I would not be able to do this work without the experiences I've had in the classroom and the people I've met along the way. It will truly take a community wide effort to close achievement and opportunity gaps, and no organization is contributing more than TFA Hawaii.

In closing, I want to reiterate the important role TFA Hawaii plays 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. Ultimately, it is our kids who will benefit the most from this decision.

Mahalo for your consideration,

David Miyashiro  
Founding Executive Director  
HawaiiKidsCAN

[EXTERNAL] Testimony (Comment on NBI 23 13: Continuing State Approval for Teach For America's Educator Preparation Unit and Programs) – reference only will take out and use in email

Auerbach, Erin <Erin.Auerbach@teachforamerica.org>

Tue 10/24/2023 5:23 AM

To: HTSB <htsb@hawaii.gov>

October 24, 2023

Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board  
650 Iwilei Road, Suite 268  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96817  
[htsb@hawaii.gov](mailto:htsb@hawaii.gov)

Aloha members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board:

My name is Erin Pauahi Auerbach and I am the Director of Development at Teach For America Hawai'i. I am writing to share why I feel strongly that **Teach for America Hawai'i's teacher preparation program should be awarded 7 years of state approval without conditions.**

I was not previously a classroom teacher. However, in my everyday work, I am surrounded by former teachers who are now teacher coaches responsible for delivering and managing our ARC program. Their goal in developing Corps Members is not only to ensure that they are strong classroom leaders who are fully prepared to be licensed, but also to develop them as humans.

Coaches take the time to deeply know and understand each and every corps member, including their motivations, their hopes, and their fears, investing in creating reciprocal relationships, and building lasting connections. Naturally, they provide technical support, and this mentoring is specific to each person – not one size fits all.


Additionally, through TFAMILY Professional Development 'āina based days, they ensure our Corps Members build a strong understanding for the direct communities they are working in, build relationships with one another, and continue to learn about Hawai'i, Hawaiian culture, history, and ways of being.

The secret sauce of our coaches is this dynamic interplay between their high expectations, unyielding belief, and genuine care for each and every one of our Corps Members.

As a result, when I lead our donors and stakeholders on visits to our partner schools, they see our teachers inspire and engage students in innovative and meaningful ways, for example with technology that allows them to demonstrate mastery of a lesson through leveling up in a gaming interface and with culturally relevant curriculum that connects the knowledge of our ancestors to modern math and science concepts as well as poetry and written expression.

At a personal level, I am named for Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop who bequeathed her lands for the education of Hawaiian children because she could see how, with education, our people would once again prosper. She would be proud of the educators that TFA Hawai'i recruits, develops, and supports in our local classrooms. TFA indeed provides a quality program and alternative route to ensure educators have a path to licensure and I urge you to grant full state approval without conditions in alignment with the 7-years of approval already received from AAQEP.

Me ke aloha a me ka ha'aha'a,



**Erin Pauahi Auerbach**

Director, Development and External Network  
500 Ala Moana Blvd, Suite 3-580  
917.539.6991 (Mobile)



**Teach For America**

One day, all children in this nation will have the opportunity to attain an equitable and excellent education.



October 21, 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 Pi'ikea Kalakau-Baarde and I am a 2015 alumni of TFA Hawai'i & as of a few months ago, currently work on TFA staff. I am writing to share why I feel strongly that **Teach for America Hawai'i's teacher preparation program should be awarded 7 years of state approval without conditions** based on my experiences as a Corps Member of the program and as someone who is kama'āina from a rural community similar to where TFA Corps Members serve.

I joined TFA a few years out of college while working at the State Capitol. I wanted to make a more concrete impact on the Native Hawaiian community at large and realized through my time at the legislature that working in education would be the best way to do that. Being that I had already graduated from college, TFA was the most feasible option for me in terms of alternative routes to credentialing in the State. TFA's ARC program allowed me to transition into a career in education, and obtain both the necessary licensure to be a teacher and a Master's degree while continuing to live and work in Hawai'i. In addition, TFA had a clear mission that aligned with my values: to promote educational equity in Hawai'i through their work as a teacher preparation program, community partnerships, and dedication to serving Hawai'i's children.

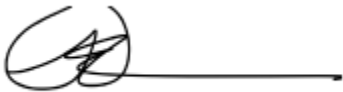
TFA was the most challenging thing I have done in my professional and academic career. Every day, for two years, I strived to be the best educator I could be for my students with the unwavering support of TFA staff members, who worked closely with coaches and admin from my school, as well as instructors from Johns Hopkins University, where I completed my Master's degree during my two years as a TFA corps member. Through my TFA experience, I learned how to expand on the Language Arts curriculum to reach the whole child, analyze data to target my students' individual and specific needs and build relationships with others to contribute to my school community.

My experience as a TFA corps member changed the trajectory of my life. I loved every minute of my time in the classroom on the Wai‘anae coast, and uphold relationships with former students, staff, and community members to this day. From my time as a classroom teacher, I realized my passion for service, and I have since served on my local neighborhood board, the boards of various community organizations, and more. TFA's vast network of alumni in Hawai'i and beyond has opened many doors for me personally and professionally. I'm unsure of where I'd be personally and professionally if I hadn't pursued teaching through TFA Hawai'i.

I want to reiterate the important role TFA Hawai'i plays 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. In closing, I'd like to leave you with this 'ōlelo no'eau: "A'ohe pau ka 'ike i ka hālau ho'okahi", meaning "all knowledge is not taught in the same school." While my route to a career in education was not traditional, it was the best choice for me, and I am thankful that I had the opportunity to do so through TFA's alternative route to credentialing program.

Sincerely,

Pi'ikea Kalakau-Baarde

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'P' and 'K' followed by a horizontal line.

Director, Regional Team Initiatives  
Teach for America Hawai'i  
TFA Hawai'i 2015 Alum

October 12, 2023

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

**Subject:** Testimony

Aloha members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board,

My name is Brigitte Russo and I am a 2015 Teach For America alumni and I have been teaching at Wai'anae Intermediate for the past 9 years. I am writing to share why I feel strongly that Teach for America Hawai'i's teacher preparation program should be awarded 7 years of state approval.

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. Without TFA there are little to no options for lower income people to teach while acquiring their license. Going back to school without working was not an option for me. Therefore, I think it is essential to keep such a program running.

I have continued to contribute to our Hawai'i public schools for over 9 years through my work as a teacher where I have been able to rewrite curriculums, be published, and seek out a PhD.

**HOMEGROWN:** Teach For America- Hawai'i provided a feasible pathway for me to be an educator here at home. Having grown up in Hawai'i, I am deeply committed to working towards educational equity in my home 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 journey in what has become and will continue to be a life-long career in education.

**NOT HOMEGROWN:** 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.

In closing, I want to reiterate the important role TFA Hawai'i plays 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 in alignment with the 7-years of approval they have already received from AAQEP.

Sincerely,  
Brigitte Russo



Teacher  
8th grade Science, Waiʻanae Intermediate  
TFA Hawaiʻi 2015 Alumni

# MA KA HANA KA 'IKE

*"In Working, One Learns"*

October 24, 2023

Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board  
650 Iwilei Road, Suite 268  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96817  
[htsb@hawaii.gov](mailto: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,

I am Lipoa Kahaleuahi, a 2011 Teach for America alum, and the current Executive Director of the nonprofit organization Ma Ka Hana Ka 'Ike. I am also a 2007 graduate of Hāna High & Elementary School, a recipient of the Gates Millenium Scholarship, and the first in my 'ohana to attend college and obtain a Bachelor's and Master's degree. Today, I write to you in strong support of Teach for America Hawai'i's teacher preparation program and that it should be awarded seven years of state approval without conditions.

Becoming a teacher was one of the most difficult experiences of my life. I was fresh out of college, returning home to Hawai'i, empowered by my recent accomplishments, and ready to make an impact. While an intense, six-week summer preparation program had already introduced me to the hurdles and rewards of working with 8th graders from inter-city Houston, I was still quite naive to the intricacies of teaching, even with students from similar backgrounds and communities as my own.

Despite the challenges, Teach for America Hawai'i's credential program provided me with valuable learning and development that prepared me for the classroom and shaped my leadership beyond it. It was rigorous because it had to be. We weren't just teaching in theory; we were teaching for the next day, and the following weeks and months as we stepped into the roles of full-time teaching immediately.

I recognize the criticism and skepticism of an alternative teaching and credential program like that of Teach for America. It is not conventional. However, let's focus on Teach For America's primary goal: to end the systemic inequities in education so that one day, every child—no matter their zip code—can receive an excellent education. And while this goal requires excellent, life-long teachers, it will take each and every one of us—whether we become doctors, lawyers, farmers, or entrepreneurs—to see it through.

**MA KA HANA KA 'IKE**

P.O. Box 968 ♡ HĀNA, HI 96713  
PH (808) 248-8581 ♡ FAX (877) 595-3585  
[lipoa@hanabuild.org](mailto:lipoa@hanabuild.org) ♡ [www.hanabuild.org](http://www.hanabuild.org)

# MA KA HANA KA 'IKE

*"In Working, One Learns"*

That is what hooked me. I didn't know if I wanted to teach forever. Yet what I did know, is that I wanted to return to give back to my community and uplift our lāhui. Teach For America Hawai'i and its credential program allowed me to explore doing just that in a timely and economically feasible way.

I am no longer teaching in the classroom. Yet the values and commitment instilled during my time as a corp member and a kanaka maoli returning home have been vital in my capabilities as a leader today. Ma Ka Hana Ka 'Ike, meaning "in working or doing, one learns," focuses on providing hands-on vocational skills training to the youth of my alma mater through projects that directly serve our community. We recognize that students like [REDACTED] learn best when they're building Auntie a 12x16 foot cottage to age safely at home, or like [REDACTED], she can provide her kūpuna with fresh produce she's grown. My lived experiences, including becoming a licensed teacher as a TFA Hawai'i corps member, solidified my commitment to the education field and to how we must transform it beyond the classroom for future generations.

TFA is not the only solution at home here in Hawai'i, but it is part of the solution. Being a teacher is already tough to begin with. I urge you to grant them full state approval in alignment with the seven years of approval already received from AAQEP without conditions so that we can continue to build solutions for our schools, communities, and lāhui.

Mahalo nō,



Lipoa Kahaleuahi  
Executive Director  
TFA Hawai'i 2011 Alum

**MA KA HANA KA 'IKE**

P.O. Box 968 ☎ HĀNA, HI 96713  
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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)

Aloha members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board,

My name is Esther Kwon and I am a 2012 Teach For America alum and I am currently a vice principal at Daniel K. Inouye Elementary School. I am writing to share why I feel strongly that **Teach for America Hawai'i's teacher preparation program should be awarded 7 years of state approval without conditions.**

Teach for America Hawai'i's credential program has provided me with valuable learning and development. My experiences as a TFA corps member have been instrumental in shaping how I operate as a school leader today. TFA Hawai'i is intentional in its programming and instills in their corps members the values of kuleana, 'ohana, and aloha; develops reflective practitioners who strive to choose courage and act with humility; and inspires leaders to achieve excellence and equity for all. I continue to be supported by TFA today as a school leader in the Hawai'i State Department of Education. We have hired four 2022 corps members who teach and work directly with Kindergarten and third-grade students.

I have continued to contribute to our Hawai'i public schools for over a decade through my work as a teacher and now vice principal at my placement school as a TFA corps member. I have taught and led various programs throughout my 11 years of service: Fifth Grade, Gifted and Talented Enrichment, World Language (Korean), Student Council, New Teacher Mentoring, School Community Council, and Pineapple Academy (100% Distance Learning for Leilehua-Mililani-Waialua Complex Area). As a vice principal, my work continues to focus on living out our school vision of empowering 650 students and 100+ faculty and staff members to explore, discover, create, and share.

Teach For America Hawai'i provided a feasible path into the classroom and helped me to build connections to the local community. Without TFA, I would not have had the opportunity to become a teacher in Hawai'i. 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. Year after year, I kept staying on because of the sense of commitment and responsibility that was rooted in me as a TFA corps member. TFA has

provided me with high-quality programming and networks to seek out opportunities to improve systems within our school, complex area, and state for years to come.

There are currently 571 TFA corps members and alums living and working here on the islands with approximately 390 of them working in roles directly impacting our education system in Hawaii. Teach For America Hawai'i finds and develops school leaders and builds a strong network to accelerate systems change in order to make a positive impact on the lives of our keiki. In closing, I want to reiterate the important role TFA Hawai'i plays 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.

Sincerely,  
Esther Kwon

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ekwon', written in a cursive style.

Vice Principal, Daniel K. Inouye Elementary School  
TFA Hawai'i 2012 Alum

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)

Aloha members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board,

My name is Cameron Kubota and I am a 2013 Teach For America alum and currently serve as the temporarily assigned principal at Lincoln Elementary School. I am writing to share why I feel strongly that **Teach for America Hawai'i's teacher preparation program should be awarded 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. Through collaboration with TFA staff and my fellow corps members, I gained valuable insights to continuously improve my vision for education as well as solidify my beliefs and core values that continue to inform my leadership practices today. I truly believe in the power of education and it is because of my experiences and opportunities afforded through TFA that I remain invested in the future of our keiki and continue my work as a school administrator. I continue to be supported by TFA today through administration mentoring and leadership development.

I have continued contributing to our Hawai'i public schools for over 10 years through my work as a teacher, academic coach, and now through school administration. As a teacher and academic coach, I had the opportunity to shape the direction of our math, science, physical education, and health departments at Wai'anae High School. I was responsible for coordinating school initiatives (STEM honors, project-based learning, inquiry-based instruction) and helped to facilitate collaboration amongst faculty and staff, ensuring the success of all teachers and students. Now as a school administrator, I continue this work on a larger scale. I have the opportunity to work collaboratively with all faculty and staff, leveraging the strength of our community to ensure we are providing the best education possible for our students and families. TFA has always supported me in my work and leadership endeavors, a privilege that I know is not always afforded to budding academic coaches and school administrators.

Teach For America- Hawai'i provided a feasible pathway for me to be an educator here at home. Having grown up in Hawai'i, I am deeply committed to working towards educational equity in my home 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 journey in what has become and will continue to be a life-long career in education.

In closing, I want to reiterate the important role TFA Hawai'i plays 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 full state approval without conditions in alignment with the 7-years of approval they have already received from AAQEP.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Kubota', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cameron Kubota  
TA Principal  
Lincoln Elementary School



To: Hawaii State Teacher Standards Board

From: Alex Harris, Vice President for Programs

Date: October 24, 2023

Re: Testimony (Commentary on GBM Action Item NBI 23-13)

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The Harold K.L. Castle Foundation has proudly invested in Teach for America – Hawaii for nearly twenty years. TFA-HI has a long and honorable track record of attracting talented educators to hard to staff regions and teacher lines. They have also helped alumni to step into school, complex area, and state leadership positions providing a critical source of talent to our ecosystem.

We support full approval of TFA-HI without conditions, in line with a similar decision by the well-regarded Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP).

In closing, I want to reiterate the important role TFA Hawai'i plays 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.

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)

Aloha members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board,

My name is Mathieu Williams and I am a 2012 Teach For America alum and I currently teach at Kealakehe High School. I am writing to share why I feel strongly that **Teach for America Hawai'i's teacher preparation program should be awarded 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. Specifically, the coaching provided while I was a Corps Member was instrumental in my ability to create relevancy and strengthen engagement for my special education students. The feedback that my coach provided and connections made through the regular TFA community days were helpful for gaining new insights, learning best practices, and strengthening my cultural pedagogy necessary for being an effective educator. I continue to be supported by TFA today through alumni leadership opportunities such as visiting schools across the country, professional development with [Deloitte](#), or building community with other local school and state leaders. .

I have continued to contribute to our Hawai'i public schools for over 11 years through my work as a teacher and Vice Principal where I have been able to build systems and programs that impact the learning and leadership of students and teachers. Whether it be helping to support the [Ignite tutoring program](#) on my school's campus or helping to empower youth and teachers through our [iLab PDE3 Course](#) to think globally and innovate locally around a school challenge.

Teach For America Hawai'i provided a feasible pathway for me to be an educator here at home. Having grown up on Kaua'i, I am deeply committed to working towards educational equity in my home 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 journey in what has become and will continue to be a life-long career in education.

In closing, I want to reiterate the important role TFA Hawai'i plays 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.

Sincerely,



Mathieu Williams  
High School CTE Teacher at Kealakehe High School  
TFA Hawai'i 2012 Corps Alum  
2019 Hawai'i State Teacher of the Year

October 24, 2023

Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board  
650 Iwilei Road, Suite 268  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96817  
[htsb@hawaii.gov](mailto: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,

I'm Harmonie Ahuna and I am a 2021 Teach For America alumni and I currently work as a Manager for multiple regional team initiatives at Teach For America Hawai'i. I am writing not just as a current staff member, but also as an alumni of our program to share why I feel strongly that **Teach for America Hawai'i's teacher preparation program should be awarded 7 years of state approval without conditions.**

Teach for America Hawai'i's credential program has provided me with valuable learning and development that prepared me for the classroom and shaped my leadership. The program emphasizes values and mindsets that are so important to our haumana. We were not only taught how to do the basics of lesson planning and classroom management, but we delved deeper into imagining radical possibilities for our students and our classrooms. We were encouraged to think outside of the box and at the systemic level to support our students. This lens into education but also the systemic inequities that our keiki face as a whole, continue to impact me now as a leader.

Our ARC program is meant to be responsive as you work through the day to day challenges of your first year in the classroom. This made all of our courses and assignments extremely relevant and I had a lot of support from my teaching coach and content learning community while I navigated the realities of being a first year teacher. The data tracking assignments we completed and vision statements we worked on for our students were all applicable and thus able to be more meaningful considering they would impact our actual students.

Looking at our program from a broader lens, I am a very recent alumni of our program and though I am no longer teaching, I continue to impact Hawai'i's communities through my work as a manager with Teach For America Hawai'i. After teaching fourth grade and having a very direct impact on my students, I shifted into this role on our team where I can support education and our communities at a more systemic level. I now play a role in ensuring more kama'āina and Kānaka Maoli enter our program and connect to their kuleana serving our students. I also develop our summer training program with our local context in mind so that we can be responsive to what our students currently need. Additionally, I work on our alumni network team and engage our expansive alumni network, the majority of whom are still working in education here.

Teach For America has meant so much to me over the course of the past 5 years. I was born and raised in California, but my parents are both from Hawai'i and I am Native Hawaiian. Because of this, I've always felt connected to Hawai'i, but wasn't quite sure what my role or pathway to

support a community I deeply cared about would be. For most of my life actually, I wanted to go into medicine because as a first generation college student, I felt like that was my only sure route to “success” for myself and my family. Teach for America however changed that skewed view of success. I got the opportunity to do a Fellowship with the broader organization and for the first time, immersed myself in an understanding of my own identity and diversity, equity, and inclusion. When I learned that there was a TFA region here in Hawai‘i, I knew I wanted to be a part of this work.

This program provided a feasible pathway for me to become an educator, and leader for the lāhui. I like to say that our program gave me a pathway to enact my kuleana. Through TFA Hawai‘i, I not only learned how to be an effective educator, but I connected to ‘āina, our communities, and my own identity in ways I never had the privilege of before and I am so grateful to our program for this profound personal and professional impact. Being able to become a licensed teacher through my experience as a TFA Hawai‘i corps member served as the critical foundation for my journey in what has become and will continue to be a life-long career in education.

In closing, I want to reiterate the important role TFA Hawai‘i plays 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.

Sincerely,  
Harmonie

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Harmonie', with a stylized, flowing script.

Manager, Teach For America Hawai‘i  
TFA Hawai‘i 2021 Alumni

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)

Aloha members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board,

My name is Jaz Palafox and I am a 2021 Teach For America alum, and I am currently a teacher and the Science Department Head at Wai'anae High School. I am writing to share why I feel strongly that **Teach for America Hawai'i's teacher preparation program should be awarded 7 years of state approval without conditions.**

ARC is the tool that helped me become the teacher I am today. I felt prepared to enter into the classroom as a brand new teacher, right out of college because of the summer education we were provided. I never felt that I lacked anything and TFA was there for me for anything I needed. Being able to get my teaching credentials simultaneously the first year I was teaching is the reason I am still a teacher today. TFA teachers are dedicated, smart, and able to handle a heavy load. Without the ARC program, I most likely would have sought out a career on the mainland and not returned to Hawai'i.

I am currently in my 3rd year at Wai'anae High School and the youngest department head. I am always available to help with anything they need me to do, and have assisted with creating a more lab-based Physical Science curriculum, served as a STEM honors mentor, and Career and Technical Education Pathway mentor, and tutored many students after school. I know that I am making a huge impact in my students lives because they tell me so. Also, many students who were deemed "problem kids" are no longer so and are loving school and flourishing.

I was born and raised in Hawai'i and felt a huge desire to give back to my state. When I was a high school student, I was given an incredible opportunity to be educated at Punahou School and felt that so many students there did not even recognize how privileged they were to have such incredible resources at their fingertips. I have always felt that all students deserve equal privilege and the highest level of education whether that be public or private. Teach For America- Hawai'i laid out a plan for me to follow, and become an educator here at home. I got my degrees -a BS in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, and a BA in Psychology, and was on the path to entering the medical profession. But, after 2 years as a TFA teacher, I never want to leave Wai'anae High School. Had it not been for TFA I would not have been an educator and would not have truly lived out my calling in life.

In closing, I want to reiterate the important role TFA Hawai'i plays in helping to recruit and support educators in our local classrooms. I remember being introduced to TFA when I was in High School and to be honest I never thought I would be a teacher. I was a science girl and the course work was grueling. I mean who does Physical Chemistry for fun—deriving their own formulas to calculate chemical equations? Everyone in my college courses had medical jobs on their radar. I was even fortunate to be awarded a fellowship for Organic Chemistry research at my college and spent a summer assisting a professor with his research. Without TFA I would not have pursued teaching, and now, I plan on teaching in Hawai'i for good. 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.

Sincerely,

*Jaz Palafox*

9th Grade Physical Science Teacher/Science Department Head, Wai'anae High School  
TFA Hawai'i 2021 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)

Aloha members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board,

My name is Lauren Gaeta and I am a 2013 Teach For America alum, taught at Wai'anae HS for 6 years, and I currently am a Manager of Regional Initiatives at Teach For America Hawai'i. I am writing to share why I feel strongly that **Teach for America Hawai'i's teacher preparation program should be awarded 7 years of state approval without conditions.**

When I joined Teach For America Hawai'i's credential program, my intentions were not to just get licensed, but to make an impact on education in Hawai'i and offset the disparities we see in the local communities caused by systemic issues by providing students the opportunities they deserve to fulfill their potential.

The credential program provided me with foundational knowledge and valuable learning experiences and opportunities that prepared me for the classroom and more importantly, shaped my leadership to be a culturally-responsive educator.

There is a focus on responsive instructional leadership, personal and shared vision orientation, honoring place, and Diversity Equity, and Inclusiveness (DEI) through identity and leadership development. The program helped remind me that setting a meaningful and responsive vision requires deep understanding and respect for Hawai'i, students, and school communities. The reflections, programming, and coaching conversations around this focus, layered with the Hawai'i Teacher Performance Standards, helped prepare me to be a leader at my placement school.

The success I found in my classroom with my students soon earned me the position as course lead then to science department head by my 4th year of teaching. All the while, I was coaching girl's basketball and track and field. School admin and athletic department saw my commitment and leadership and asked me to be interim assistant athletic director when our school was going through a transition in my 3rd year. I also volunteered to be the class advisor of the class of 2018, seeing that class from their freshman year to graduation and all the celebrations and hardships in between. When most of those things happened, I was already out of the 2 year program, but I was still supported by my Teach For America Hawai'i network and mentor, and I wouldn't have stepped into leadership if it weren't for the reflections and coaching conversations with my mentor and the foundation that the program laid out for me that set me up for success in my first 2 years.

Now, as a coach for Teach For America Hawai'i for the last 4 years, I have been able to continue designing inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for leadership growth, lead coaching conversations for teachers to see their strengths and potential with the ultimate focus on student success, and collaborate with community members, organizations, and school administrators to maximize impact and support in our local communities.

I am fortunate in this role to be still connected to the schools and support the community I taught in. I am the most proud to see students I taught 10 years ago now teaching in classrooms of their own, and would like to

think my journey as a Teach For America corps member, and my other TFA peers they had as teachers, helped shape these former students to be on the path to be educators in their own community.

In closing, I want to reiterate the important role TFA Hawai'i plays in helping to recruit and support educators in our local classrooms. It is a program that is cultivating educators to be leaders that go above and beyond to make a lasting impact on our serving communities. 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.

Sincerely,  
Lauren Gaeta

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lauren Gaeta', written in a cursive style.

Manager of Regional Initiatives / Teach For America Hawai'i  
TFA Hawai'i 2013 Alum

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)

Aloha, members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board,

My name is Kaelin Tancayo-Spielvogel, a proud Native Hawaiian educator from the small rural island of Moloka'i, and a 2017 Teach For America Hawai'i alum. I am currently serving our keiki as an English Teacher at Punahou School, and it is with a heart full of gratitude and passion that I write to advocate for the continued approval and support of Teach For America Hawai'i's educator preparation programs.

The journey to becoming an educator is a deeply personal and transformative one, especially when it is rooted in the desire to give back to one's community. Teach For America Hawai'i has been instrumental in my development as an educator, providing me with an immersive and comprehensive preparation that reflects the unique cultural and educational landscape of Hawai'i. Through consistent monthly support sessions, check-ins, and a network of experienced educators and leaders, the program ensured that I was not just well-prepared for the classroom but also grounded in the values and traditions of our Hawaiian culture.

Being from Moloka'i, I bring with me the values of 'ohana, aloha, and kuleana – values that were nurtured and honed through my time with Teach For America. The program's commitment to cultivating educators who are not just teachers, but also community leaders and advocates for educational equity, has been evident in the opportunities provided for continuous learning and growth. As a Native Hawaiian educator, this has empowered me to serve my students and community with authenticity, passion, and a deep sense of responsibility.

In my ongoing role as an Instructional Coach, I have had the privilege of guiding and supporting new teachers in their journey, many of whom are part of the Teach For America 'ohana. My work allows me to share the wisdom and experiences I gained through the program, creating a ripple effect of positive impact on our students, schools, and the broader community.

Teach For America Hawai'i has provided me with a pathway to fulfill my kuleana as an educator in my home state, allowing me to contribute to the education of our keiki and work towards educational equity in Hawai'i. The program's commitment to supporting homegrown educators ensures that we are building a strong, culturally-responsive teaching force that is reflective of and dedicated to our communities.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly endorse and support Teach For America Hawai'i's request for a 7-year state approval without conditions. The program's track record of success, its commitment to excellence, and its unwavering support for educators like myself are a testament to its vital role in our educational landscape. I urge the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board to recognize the invaluable contributions of Teach For America Hawai'i and to continue supporting the program in its mission to nurture and develop effective, culturally-responsive educators for our keiki.

Mahalo nui loa for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kaelin Tancayo-Spielvogel', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kaelin Tancayo-Spielvogel

English Teacher, Punahou School  
TFA Hawai'i 2017 Corps Alum - Wai'anae High School 2017-2021  
Native Hawaiian Educator from Moloka'i



October 23, 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 for Teacher Education Committee Meeting and General Business Meeting)

Aloha Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board Members,

As the HTSB approved Local Practitioner on the AAQEP site visit team, I am writing to express my support for Teach for America (TFA) as a high-quality program and urge the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board to award TFA with 7 years of state approval without conditions or areas for improvement as recommended by AAQEP.

As the Local Practitioner on the AAQEP site visit team, I spent many hours reviewing the TFA program, including carefully examining their documents, reviewing their data, and interviewing all the different stakeholder groups involved with the TFA program. After reviewing all that information, I am very confident in my assessment that TFA is a high-quality program, produces well-trained teachers, and is meeting an essential need in our local schools with our keiki.

It is my opinion, that TFA was following all the policies that have been developed for teacher preparation programs, including NBI 12-27 rev., which have been continuously monitored by HTSB through annual reports, annual audits, annual teacher preparation program meetings, and other documentation since their last accreditation approval from HTSB. No concerns were raised during all those years and all those contacts indicating that TFA was not doing exactly what they should have been doing. As far as I understand, the TFA candidates have all been teaching in the content areas for which they have been recommended for licensure. Many of them were fortunate to be hired as Special Education Teachers by the Hawaii DOE to fill important shortage areas and meet the needs of the state and the needs of our children. Special Education teachers in inclusive settings do not teach Special Education, they teach subjects like math, science and language arts. TFA candidates having the opportunity to teach their content in diverse inclusive classroom settings surely makes them more skilled and compassionate teachers.

My concern with placing the many conditions on the TFA program is that they were simply following the policies as they were written and implemented. I do not feel that the change in how the policies are now being interpreted should impact the approval of the TFA program.

They have always followed the rules as they were explained to them by HTSB. The conditions and areas for improvement outlined in NBI 23-13 look and feel very punitive to me.

My hope is that the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board sees its role as uplifting the teaching profession, encouraging innovative programs to attract and retain qualified teachers, and building a bright future for our Keiki rather than looking to condemn, punish, and restrict teacher preparation programs who are actually following the policies and guidelines as they were developed, explained and monitored. I am happy to see the revisions in NBI 12-27 rev. that are on the October 27<sup>th</sup> HTSB meeting agenda as they clarify the re-interpretation of the student teaching policies. I am confident that TFA will follow the new interpretation just as they have always followed the HTSB policies in the past. In fact, they have already implemented this revised interpretation for their 2023-2024 cohort placements.

I strongly believe that we should all be welcoming and thanking high quality programs like TFA who are helping us to fill the critical shortage of qualified teachers in Hawaii. Again, I urge the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board to award TFA with 7 years of state approval without the conditions outlined in NBI 23-13.

Sincerely,

*Dale Fryxell*

Dale Fryxell, PhD  
Dean, School of Education and Behavioral Sciences

## [EXTERNAL] Testimony for NBI 23 13

Lindsay Kosasa <lindsay.kosasa@k12.hi.us>

Wed 10/25/2023 7:29 AM

To: HTSB <htsb@hawaii.gov>

Aloha members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board,

My name is Lindsay Kosasa and I am a 2013 alumni of TFA Hawaii. I am currently in my 11th year at my placement school, Waipahu High School, nine years of which were in special education. I am writing to share why I feel strongly that **Teach for America Hawai'i's teacher preparation program should be awarded 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. I am a new teacher mentor, I founded the dance elective and competitive team in my second year of teaching, and I was a class advisor for the Class of 2021. I continue to be supported by TFA today through alumni events, and through unofficial mentorship of new corps members who come to my school.

Teach For America- Hawai'i provided a feasible pathway for me to be an educator here at home. Having grown up in Hawai'i, I am deeply committed to working toward educational equity in the Waipahu community and beyond. Being able to become a licensed teacher through my experience as a TFA Hawai'i corps member served as the critical foundation for my journey in what has become and will continue to be a life long career in education.

In closing, I want to reiterate the important role TFA Hawai'i plays 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 condition in alignment with the 7-years of approval they have already received from AAQEP.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Kosasa

Teacher, Waipahu High School

Teach For America Hawaii 2013



**LINDSAY KOSASA**

GEOMETRY  
CREATIVE DANCE

LINDSAY.KOSASA@K12.HI.US | 808.3079625

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[EXTERNAL] Testimony related to NBI 23 13

Mark LaCelle-Peterson <m.lacelle.peterson@aaqep.org>

Wed 10/25/2023 8:21 AM

To: HTSB <htsb@hawaii.gov>

 1 attachment (174 KB)

mlp ltr to j baldemor re HTSB NBI 22-102 resolution 13 Oct 2023.pdf;

Teacher Education Committee Chair Ornelles, and HTSB Chair Kawazoe,

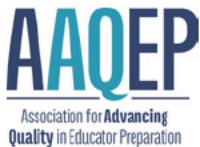
Thank you for receiving this email message and the attached document as testimony related to NBI 23 13. AAQEP takes seriously its obligation to monitor publicly available information concerning programs that are accredited by AAQEP. The attached letter details our response to the May 23, 2023 HTSB discussion of NBI 22 102.

The report, a letter to Jill Baldemore that was copied to Executive Director Villalobos and Chair Kawazoe, affirms the AAQEP Accreditation Commission decision of April, 2023, awarding seven year accreditation to TFA Hawaii, and affirming that all AAQEP standards are met.

Please let me know if AAQEP can be of further assistance to the Board in its work.

All the best,

Mark



**Mark LaCelle-Peterson**

President and CEO

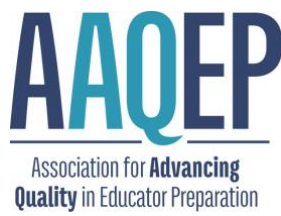
Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation

Voice or text: 585-298-1694

Email: [m.lacelle.peterson@aaqep.org](mailto:m.lacelle.peterson@aaqep.org)

Visit [aaqep.org](http://aaqep.org) and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#)

*The [2024 Quality Assurance Symposium](#) is coming to Orlando April 4-5. **Register by November 16** for the Early Bird discount!*



October 13, 2023

Jill Baldemor  
Executive Director  
Teach for America Hawai'i  
500 Ala Moana Blvd.  
Suite 3-580  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Jill,

I hope this finds you well and enjoying a productive Fall. This letter communicates the conclusion of AAQEP's review of Teach for America Hawai'i (TFA-HI) with regard to its continued compliance with AAQEP Standard 4, aspect e (4e), which requires that accredited educator preparation providers meet obligations and mandates established by the state in which it operates. AAQEP's conclusion is that TFA-HI continues to meet all AAQEP standards, including 4e.

As an accreditor, AAQEP is obligated to monitor and respond to publicly available information regarding the programs it accredits, particularly when such information raises the possibility that an accredited member may be at risk of no longer meeting one or more aspects of the AAQEP standards. Shortly after AAQEP's site visit to Teach for America Hawai'i in January of 2023, AAQEP learned that HTSB staff who observed the site visit expressed a concern regarding the appropriateness of clinical placements (teaching assignments) for some TFA-HI first-year corps members. Those concerns eventually resulted in the presentation of HTSB NBI 22-102 on May 23, 2023, which called into question the ability of some (17) TFA-HI candidates to receive teaching licenses due to the nature of their teaching assignments. This raised the question regarding 4e.

On behalf of AAQEP, I attended, virtually, the entire HTSB meeting on May 23, and was impressed by the public comments provided by TFA-HI corps members, alumni, and school-based educators who have partnered with TFA. I also reviewed all posted written testimony related to NBI 22-102 which likewise consistently affirmed both TFA-HI's work with schools and the effectiveness of corps members, beginning in their first year and continuing through their service in the schools. Testimony further noted that many TFA completers have successfully added special education licenses through the state's testing option and that they have continued to serve in special education roles, including leadership roles, throughout the system.

The final approved version of NBI 22-102 defined a path forward for all TFA candidates whose placements were in question to attain teaching licenses. Oral statements by Board members encouraged TFA-HI to develop a special education preparation program so that it might help address the urgent need for licensed special education teachers in hard-to-staff schools in Hawai'i.

Following the May 23 meeting, AAQEP contacted TFA-HI to request two sets of information that would confirm that the issues raised in the discussion of NBI 22-102 had been adequately addressed: first, information regarding the success of 2022-23 first-year corps members in receiving the teaching licenses for which they were recommended, particularly the group of 17

whose placements were questioned in NBI 22-102; and second, a list of teaching placements for 2023-24 first-year corps members showing that no first-year corps members enrolled in the ARC program and working toward licensure have been hired in special education positions. On August 27, 2023, and in follow up communications, TFA-HI provided AAQEP with confirmation that all 51 individuals recommended for licensure in Spring/Summer 2023 have received licenses, and with placement details for 2023-24 first-year corps members showing that no first-year corps members who are enrolled in the ARC program and seeking licensure were in special education positions.

AAQEP finds that TFA-HI remains in compliance with all AAQEP standards, including aspect 4e and that candidates' interests have been protected. This finding is based on the resolution of NBI 22-102 (May 23, 2023), and on the information on licensure outcomes and teaching assignments provided to AAQEP by TFA-HI. AAQEP also notes TFA-HI's history of compliance with HTSB requirements as evidenced in NBI 19-17, NBI 20-17, NBI 21-20, and NBI 22-58, each of which affirmed the appropriateness of teaching assignments through HTSB's annual compliance audits. AAQEP notes as well that current first-year corps member placements are in keeping with the recent directive regarding placements from HTSB dated July 7, 2023, which is based on the USED Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP 22-01) October 4, 2022, memo to SEAs regarding requirements for issuing of emergency licenses for those in special education positions.

In a larger sense, this review of TFA-HI's work with local schools that are experiencing high needs and with teacher candidates serving in those schools affirms the findings of the AAQEP Accreditation Commission, which provided the following rationale for its decision to award TFA-HI with accreditation status for seven years:

[TFA-HI t]eacher candidates develop the knowledge, skills, and abilities to work effectively as professional educators, devoting particular attention to the diverse cultures and settings in Hawai'i. Program completers are able to foster productive learning environments for their students, adapt to a variety of contexts, and continue to grow professionally.

The program maintains quality by analyzing evidence of its effectiveness and making revisions to benefit candidates. TFA staff collaborate with the Hawai'i State Department of Education and local school partners to coordinate intensive experiences for candidates as well as to address P-12 learner needs comprehensively, to mitigate teacher shortages, and to strengthen the P-20 education system.

Please let me know if you have any questions, and should you decide to add a special education preparation program, we look forward to working with you on that substantive change. Thank you for your continued commitment to meeting the needs of Hawai'i's students, schools, and communities for well-qualified and effective teachers.

All the best,



Mark LaCelle-Peterson, EdD  
President and CEO

CC: Felicia Villalobos, Brandon Kawazoe, Alyson Emrick

October 25, 2023

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@TeachForAmericaHawaii



@TFAHawaii



**AmeriCorps**  
An AmeriCorps Program

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 Kawazoe and Members of the Hawai'i Teachers Standard Board,

Teach For America (TFA) Hawai'i respectfully requests that Hawai'i Teachers Standards Board (HTSB) grant TFA Hawai'i 7 years of continued state approval without conditions or areas of improvement for the reasons set forth below.

1. Teach For America Hawai'i has at all times acted in accordance with HTSB's guidance, before and after NBI 22-102. The existing systems in place are sufficient for continued monitoring.
2. Approval for 7 years with no conditions is consistent with HTSB's practice of affirming the decision of the national accrediting body. TFA Hawai'i was awarded 7 years of accreditation with no conditions or concerns from AAQEP, which was further reviewed and reconfirmed following HTSB's May 23 meeting on NBI 22-102.
3. TFA Hawai'i has consistently provided our state with qualified teacher candidates and educational services and supports. Imposing burdensome conditions takes away from this work.

To the extent additional information is deemed critical, TFA Hawai'i respectfully requests that the information requested be non-duplicative information, relating to teacher candidates who are recommended for licensure (and not all teachers enrolled in the program, as not all are recommended for licensure), and not relating to specific employment details, which are more properly requested from HDOE.

***Teach For America Hawai'i has at all times acted in accordance with HTSB's guidance, before and after NBI 22-102. The existing systems in place are sufficient for continued monitoring.***

Teach For America Hawai'i's alternative route to certification program (ARC) has been a nationally accredited, state approved teacher education program since 2013. We respectfully submit that at all times, Teach For America Hawai'i has acted in accordance with HTSB's guidance, both before and after NBI 22-102.

There is no dispute that Teach For America Hawai'i recommends teacher candidates for licensure in elementary and secondary content areas. Teach For America Hawai'i teacher candidates complete supervised clinical experience in Hawai'i public schools at the appropriate grade levels and in the subject for

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which they were seeking a license, in compliance with NBI 12-27 revised.

From 2013–2023, some schools have hired TFA teachers in lines where they supported students who are eligible for Special Education services. As described in the testimony relating to NBI 22-102, these teacher candidates completed their clinical teaching experience in settings where they were gaining experience teaching a subject, often co-teaching in inclusion settings, using curriculum and standards similar to those used in general education settings. They provided Special Education support in addition to, and not in lieu of, teaching a subject area content.

Importantly, during this period, the practice of supporting teacher candidates in mild/moderate Special Education teaching lines, was done transparently and in accordance with HTSB's previous interpretation of the policy, as confirmed by HTSB's yearly audits and HTSB's licensing of these teachers who taught in these lines over the past decade. It is HTSB's annual practice to audit program completers in the following areas below, which notably includes a verification of the appropriateness of the student teaching/internship placement. (See e.g. NBI 19-17, NBI 20-17, NBI 21-20, NBI 22-58, emphasis added).

- Basic skills verification completed prior to program entry
- Content knowledge verification completed before student teaching
- **Student teaching/internship placement verification as appropriate for license field recommendation**

Teach For America Hawaii has complied with these annual audits and HTSB has licensed all teacher candidates, including those in Special Education teaching lines, up to and through the summer of 2023. Many of these teachers added the field of Special Education to their license within 3 years and some have developed expertise in Special Education, leading Special Education departments at their schools and in the Complex Area.

On April 21, 2023 and subsequently with the introduction of NBI 22-102 on May 23, 2023, HTSB shared a different interpretation of their policy and provided different guidance regarding teacher placements. In response, Teach For America Hawaii took immediate action to align with the new interpretation and be in compliance with HTSB guidance. In the school year beginning July 2023, HDOE principals were advised and have confirmed that all TFA teacher candidates enrolled in TFA Hawaii's ARC program, are in general education teaching lines only.

At all times, Teach For America Hawaii has complied with HTSB guidance, and will continue to do so. We respectfully submit that the annual audits, annual reports, and other meetings and communication with HTSB staff is appropriate and sufficient for ensuring continued compliance.

***Approval for 7 years with no conditions is consistent with HTSB's practice of affirming the decision of the national accrediting body. TFA Hawaii was awarded 7 years of accreditation with no conditions or concerns from AAQEP, which was further reviewed and reconfirmed following HTSB's May 23 meeting on NBI 22-102.***

The Association for Advancing Quality and Educator Preparation (AAQEP) is nationally recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and has membership of over 200 education preparation providers. Upon review of public information on HTSB's website, AAQEP has awarded 7 years of accreditation to 7 teacher education programs operating in Hawaii, including Teach For America Hawaii. Teach For America Hawaii's letter confirming a full term of 7 years of accreditation without any concerns noted is attached here as Exhibit A. (See letter from Mark LaCelle-Peterson, Ed.D. President and CEO, dated May 11, 2023, with a cc to Felicia Villalobos and Alyson Emrick).

For each of the other 6 programs, HTSB has granted state approval for the same period of time as awarded by AAQEP, without any additional conditions required. (See table A below). State approval of TFA Hawaii's program for 7 years without conditions is consistent with HTSB's past practice of affirming the decision of the national accrediting body and respecting AAQEP's accreditation process, which is comprehensive and rigorous, spanning

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several years of study, hundreds of pages of data and analysis, and includes an in-person site visit with dozens of interviews.

Contrary to the representation in NBI 23-13 that “AAQEP’s leadership and site visit team ... were notified of this violation and took no action,” AAQEP did conduct an additional review regarding TFA Hawai‘i’s continued compliance, including with Standard 4, aspect e (4e), which requires that accredited educator preparation providers meet obligations and mandates established by the state in which it operates. AAQEP concluded that: **“TFA-HI remains in compliance with all AAQEP standards, including aspect 4e and that candidates’ interests have been protected.”** (See letter from Mark LaCelle-Peterson, EdD President and CEO of AAQEP, dated October 13, 2023, to Jill Baldemor with a cc to Felicia Villalobos, Brandon Kawazoe, Alyson Emrick, attached as Exhibit B.)

As AAQEP has conducted a thorough review of Teach For America Hawai‘i’s program both before and after HTSB’s May 23, 2023 meeting, has found Teach For America Hawai‘i to be in compliance, we respectfully request that HTSB honor AAQEP’s approval of 7 years of accreditation without conditions as it has done for every other Hawai‘i provider that has been accredited by AAQEP.

TABLE A

Source: <https://hawaiiiteacherstandardsboard.org/content/preparation-programs-2/>

HI SATEP	AAQEP Accreditation	State Approval	NBI
BYU-H	7 years (July 2020 - June 30, 2027), <b>concern noted</b>	7 years (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2028), <b>no conditions required</b> (beyond regular annual report)	<a href="#">NBI 20-03</a>
HPU	7 years (July 30, 2021 - June 30, 2028)	7 years (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2028), <b>no conditions required</b> (beyond regular annual report)	<a href="#">NBI 21-08</a>
LCC	7 years (May 21, 2021 - June 30, 2028)	7 years (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2028), <b>no conditions required</b> (beyond regular annual report)	<a href="#">NBI 21-05</a>
Teach Away	7 years (October 27, 2021 - December 31, 2028)	7 years (October 8, 2021- December 31, 2028), <b>no conditions required</b> (beyond regular annual report)	<a href="#">NBI 21-17</a>
UH-Hilo	7 years (July 2, 2021 - June 30, 2028)	6.5 years (January 1, 2022 – June 30, 2028), <b>no conditions required</b> (beyond regular annual report)	<a href="#">NBI 21-06</a>
UH at Manoa (COE)	7 years (July 20, 2021-June 30, 2028)	6.5 years (January 1, 2022 – June 30, 2028), <b>no conditions required</b> (beyond regular annual report)	<a href="#">NBI 21-07</a>

***TFA Hawai‘i has consistently provided our state with qualified teacher candidates and educational services and supports. Imposing burdensome conditions takes away from this work.***

Since 2013, Teach For America Hawai‘i has recruited, trained, and recommended for licensure approximately 700 teacher candidates for Hawai‘i public schools. Today, there are 571 people in the Teach For America network – teachers, school and system leaders, and community advocates – who are living and contributing to the community here in Hawai‘i. Teach For America Hawai‘i staff works tirelessly to support our network in a variety of ways. 79 candidates are currently enrolled in our ARC program and regularly engage with TFA staff and partners; 125 first and second year teachers receive

regular observations, coaching, and professional development; over 400 alumni have access to resources and ongoing learning opportunities; we are partnering with 3 schools to provide tutoring support for students through our Ignite fellowship; we are partnering with 5 schools to design and execute a summer training program; we are partnering with community organizations to elevate and strengthen early literacy initiatives; and recruitment and selection of new teachers takes place year round. We share this list of activities not to pat ourselves on the back, but rather to urge HTSB to let us focus on this work that directly impacts students, teachers, and our Hawai'i public schools. Addressing the numerous conditions outlined in NBI 23-13 will be extremely time consuming and burdensome for Teach For America, as well as HTSB, and we humbly submit that the time will be better spent working toward our shared goal of providing every child in Hawai'i with qualified teachers and an excellent educational experience.

***To the extent additional information is critical, the information requested should be non-duplicative information, relating to teacher candidates who are recommended for licensure (and not all teachers enrolled in the program, as not all are recommended for licensure), and not relating to specific employment details, which are more properly requested from HDOE.***

Moreover, there are a number of specific questions, concerns, and confusing issues with the unit conditions and program areas for improvement listed in NBI 23-13. To the extent that any of the conditions are deemed essential, we respectfully request clarification and simplification as noted below.

Condition 1 requires TFA to submit a long list of documentation for each TFA teacher candidate by July 31 of each academic year. We are unclear whether "teacher candidate" refers to any teacher enrolled in the ARC program or the candidates that TFA recommends for licensure. We respectfully submit that the former interpretation is premature and untimely, while the latter interpretation is largely duplicative. TFA teachers are not all similarly situated with respect to licensure; some TFA teachers are already certified, some complete licensure requirements within one academic year, some work toward licensure over the course of 1-3 academic years. While all teachers have completed the basic skills required for an emergency hire permit as a prerequisite to enrolling in our program, teachers are at different stages in the process for licensure. On July 31 of any given year, we have the information requested for some but not all TFA teachers; specifically, not all TFA teachers who are enrolled in our program are engaging in clinical experience on July 31 and some but not all teachers have identified their license field. As HTSB's focus is on licensure, we request that HTSB clarify that "teacher candidate" refers to candidates that TFA Hawai'i has recommended for licensure. Detailed information is already shared with HTSB at the time we recommend candidates for licensure (including teaching field content and grade level, basic skills and content verification, school information and verification of model code of ethics completion), so providing this information in another form is largely duplicative. With respect to the specific request for "cooperating/mentor teacher" we respectfully note that the TFA ARC program's clinical experience does not have a school-site cooperating teacher; rather, TFA teachers are full time teachers of record in the classroom. TFA coaches provide support and development to TFA teachers, but are not school-site cooperating teachers as might be the case in a more traditional student teaching placement. Finally, with respect to the request for employment details, we respectfully submit that HDOE is a more appropriate entity to provide this information as they are the employer of the teacher candidates, not Teach For America.

Condition 2 requires TFA candidates to turn in their Notification of Personnel Action (Form 5) prior to being issued a license by HTSB. As noted above, TFA respectfully submits that employment requests are more appropriately made to HIDOE as TFA does not have access to this information. Further, we are unclear what information HTSB is seeking by requesting the Form 5; to the extent that the information sought is the same information that is submitted when TFA recommends teacher candidates for licensure, we respectfully submit that this request is unnecessarily duplicative.

Condition 3 requires that all TFA teacher candidates be audited annually for the next three (3) years. As explained above with respect to condition 1, it is unclear who "TFA teacher candidate" refers to and unclear what would be required in the audit. If "TFA teacher candidate" refers to all TFA teachers and/or all teachers enrolled in TFA's ARC program, an audit is premature as not all teachers will have completed all the licensing requirements. Assuming TFA teacher candidate refers to candidates that have been recommended for licensure, TFA respectfully submits that HTSB already conducts audits on a random sample of teachers each year. Preparing for and conducting an audit on every teacher candidate recommended for licensure would be time consuming and burdensome for both Teach For America and HTSB alike.

Condition 4 requires that TFA send a letter to school administrator(s) informing them that they are not allowed to hire TFA teachers in Special Education lines in accordance with IDEA Federal Law. TFA strongly objects to this condition as it is not appropriate for Teach For America to advise HIDOE principals on employment practices or federal law. HIDOE is the employer of teachers and is best positioned to advise its principals on hiring practices, including hiring of emergency hire teachers, in alignment with guidance from HIDOE attorneys.

To be clear, Teach For America Hawai'i fully commits to working in partnership with HTSB to ensure compliance with all policies and laws. TFA has and will continue to willingly participate in annual audits and reports and will continue to submit all the required information for each teacher candidate it recommends (including teaching field content and grade level, basic skills and content verification, school information and verification of model code of ethics completion) for HTSB to review before issuing a license. To the extent that HTSB determines that more information is necessary, we respectfully request that the information requested be non-duplicative information, relating to teacher candidates that TFA Hawai'i recommends for licensure (and not all teachers enrolled in the program, as not all are recommended for licensure), and not relating to specific employment details, which we respectfully submit are more properly requested from HIDOE.

Sincerely,



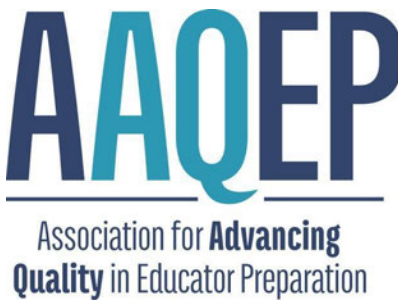
Jill Baldemor  
Executive Director  
Teach For America Hawai'i



Jeff Arce  
Board Chair  
Teach For America Hawai'i



Mitch D'Olier  
Board Chair Emeritus  
Teach For America Hawai'i



May 11, 2023

Jill Baldemor Esq.  
Executive Director  
Teach For America - Hawaii

Dear Ms. Baldemor:

This letter serves as formal notification of action taken regarding initial licensure programs of Teach For America - Hawaii by the Accreditation Commission of the Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation at its meeting on April 14, 2023.

**Action:** Based on examination of the case record, including the Quality Assurance Report and the Quality Review Team Report, the AAQEP Accreditation Commission awards **accreditation for a full term of 7 years** to the initial licensure programs of Teach For America - Hawaii.

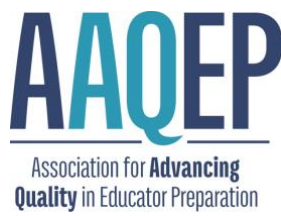
This action is effective immediately and extends **through June 30, 2030**, or until Teach For America - Hawaii ceases to be a member in good standing of AAQEP, whichever is earlier. Annual Reports are due by December 31 of each year, with the first report being due December 31, 2024. In addition, please refer to our [substantive change policy](#) for guidance on program changes that must be reported.

Congratulations!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Mark LaCelle-Peterson'.

Mark LaCelle-Peterson, Ed.D.  
President and CEO

cc: Alyson Emrick, Director, TFA-Hawaii Licensure and Regional Team Initiatives  
Felicia Villalobos, Executive Director, Hawaii Teacher Standards Board



October 13, 2023

Jill Baldemor  
Executive Director  
Teach for America Hawai'i  
500 Ala Moana Blvd.  
Suite 3-580  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Jill,

I hope this finds you well and enjoying a productive Fall. This letter communicates the conclusion of AAQEP's review of Teach for America Hawai'i (TFA-HI) with regard to its continued compliance with AAQEP Standard 4, aspect e (4e), which requires that accredited educator preparation providers meet obligations and mandates established by the state in which it operates. AAQEP's conclusion is that TFA-HI continues to meet all AAQEP standards, including 4e.

As an accreditor, AAQEP is obligated to monitor and respond to publicly available information regarding the programs it accredits, particularly when such information raises the possibility that an accredited member may be at risk of no longer meeting one or more aspects of the AAQEP standards. Shortly after AAQEP's site visit to Teach for America Hawai'i in January of 2023, AAQEP learned that HTSB staff who observed the site visit expressed a concern regarding the appropriateness of clinical placements (teaching assignments) for some TFA-HI first-year corps members. Those concerns eventually resulted in the presentation of HTSB NBI 22-102 on May 23, 2023, which called into question the ability of some (17) TFA-HI candidates to receive teaching licenses due to the nature of their teaching assignments. This raised the question regarding 4e.

On behalf of AAQEP, I attended, virtually, the entire HTSB meeting on May 23, and was impressed by the public comments provided by TFA-HI corps members, alumni, and school-based educators who have partnered with TFA. I also reviewed all posted written testimony related to NBI 22-102 which likewise consistently affirmed both TFA-HI's work with schools and the effectiveness of corps members, beginning in their first year and continuing through their service in the schools. Testimony further noted that many TFA completers have successfully added special education licenses through the state's testing option and that they have continued to serve in special education roles, including leadership roles, throughout the system.

The final approved version of NBI 22-102 defined a path forward for all TFA candidates whose placements were in question to attain teaching licenses. Oral statements by Board members encouraged TFA-HI to develop a special education preparation program so that it might help address the urgent need for licensed special education teachers in hard-to-staff schools in Hawai'i.

Following the May 23 meeting, AAQEP contacted TFA-HI to request two sets of information that would confirm that the issues raised in the discussion of NBI 22-102 had been adequately addressed: first, information regarding the success of 2022-23 first-year corps members in receiving the teaching licenses for which they were recommended, particularly the group of 17

whose placements were questioned in NBI 22-102; and second, a list of teaching placements for 2023-24 first-year corps members showing that no first-year corps members enrolled in the ARC program and working toward licensure have been hired in special education positions. On August 27, 2023, and in follow up communications, TFA-HI provided AAQEP with confirmation that all 51 individuals recommended for licensure in Spring/Summer 2023 have received licenses, and with placement details for 2023-24 first-year corps members showing that no first-year corps members who are enrolled in the ARC program and seeking licensure were in special education positions.

AAQEP finds that TFA-HI remains in compliance with all AAQEP standards, including aspect 4e and that candidates' interests have been protected. This finding is based on the resolution of NBI 22-102 (May 23, 2023), and on the information on licensure outcomes and teaching assignments provided to AAQEP by TFA-HI. AAQEP also notes TFA-HI's history of compliance with HTSB requirements as evidenced in NBI 19-17, NBI 20-17, NBI 21-20, and NBI 22-58, each of which affirmed the appropriateness of teaching assignments through HTSB's annual compliance audits. AAQEP notes as well that current first-year corps member placements are in keeping with the recent directive regarding placements from HTSB dated July 7, 2023, which is based on the USED Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP 22-01) October 4, 2022, memo to SEAs regarding requirements for issuing of emergency licenses for those in special education positions.

In a larger sense, this review of TFA-HI's work with local schools that are experiencing high needs and with teacher candidates serving in those schools affirms the findings of the AAQEP Accreditation Commission, which provided the following rationale for its decision to award TFA-HI with accreditation status for seven years:

[TFA-HI t]eacher candidates develop the knowledge, skills, and abilities to work effectively as professional educators, devoting particular attention to the diverse cultures and settings in Hawai'i. Program completers are able to foster productive learning environments for their students, adapt to a variety of contexts, and continue to grow professionally.

The program maintains quality by analyzing evidence of its effectiveness and making revisions to benefit candidates. TFA staff collaborate with the Hawai'i State Department of Education and local school partners to coordinate intensive experiences for candidates as well as to address P-12 learner needs comprehensively, to mitigate teacher shortages, and to strengthen the P-20 education system.

Please let me know if you have any questions, and should you decide to add a special education preparation program, we look forward to working with you on that substantive change. Thank you for your continued commitment to meeting the needs of Hawai'i's students, schools, and communities for well-qualified and effective teachers.

All the best,



Mark LaCelle-Peterson, EdD  
President and CEO

CC: Felicia Villalobos, Brandon Kawazoe, Alyson Emrick

## [EXTERNAL] Testimony

Derek Minakami <derek.minakami@k12.hi.us>

Wed 10/25/2023 10:20 AM

To:HTSB <htsb@hawaii.gov>

Meeting: General Business Meeting

Agenda Item: [NBI 23-13](#)

Position: Comment

Aloha mai Kākou

I am writing in support of Teach for America (TFA) and recommending that they be approved to receive a **full term of 7 years without conditions**.

As a principal who experienced the challenges of having 51% of our faculty retire, resign or transfer over the last three years and struggling with the search for qualified teachers to fill critical assignments in all grade levels and special education, I am appreciative of teacher certification programs such as TFA. It is a fully accredited program for teacher preparation that has a track record of preparing teachers that are forward thinking, creative, passionate, and dedicated to serving our public school students. Given the severe teacher shortages we face that has only been exasperated by the pandemic, schools are in serious need of teacher candidates that possess the dispositions that lift our classrooms up and empower all students to succeed. TFA has shown to be a program that reliably prepares candidates for this.

Mahalo for your consideration of this testimony.

Na'u me ka ha'aha'a

Derek

Derek Minakami, NBCT

Principal

Kāne'ohe Elementary School

He 'ohu ke aloha, 'a'ohe kuahiwi kau 'ole.#852

Aloha is a mist, there is no mountaintop that it does not settle upon.

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