

# 2022 HawaiiKidsCAN Action Fund Candidate Survey

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<b>1. What does Hawaii do well with regards to K-12 public education?</b>

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Some of the best teachers and staff I have ever seen are being resilient and working wonderfully with our keiki, including my special needs child. As a former educator myself and someone who comes from a family of teachers, the evidence based implementation of best practices (and not just "teaching to the test") are stellar here in Hawaii. Given the unusually difficult circumstances COVID presented us with, I am in awe of how amazing schools handled everything. I don't think parents realize how much worse things could be right now if the DOE and staff and teachers didn't take COVID seriously. There is another timeline where pictures of rows and rows of children hooked up to ventilators could be all over our newspapers with tragic consequences. It cannot be overstated how thankful I am to the teachers who were able to get us parents and kids through this, especially my son, who has ASD, and had a particularly difficult time getting used to mask wearing. If elected, I'm going to make sure our teachers feel the aloha from the lawmakers because they absolutely deserve it.

## 2. What should Hawaii do better with regards to K-12 public education?

Our meal program should continue to be free for all public school kids even after COVID restrictions are lifted, the exterior of our schools on the westside are in really bad shape and teachers are trudging through mud because they have nowhere to park, lack of A/C, lack of adequate shade in certain playgrounds (as temperatures rise due to global warming), and abortion care/laws should be incorporated into the DOE's sex education and health program.

## 3. How should Hawaii prioritize our spending on K-12 public education (for example: teacher salaries, programs to address learning loss, technology, community partnerships and projects, computer science education, charter schools, distance learning options, etc.)?

Continuing to fund free breakfast and lunch for all public schools in the state after COVID should be our top spending priority. Our teachers just received a long overdue and well-deserved raise, and there are many other infrastructure projects that schools need to address (especially parking, sidewalks and street lights surrounding schools, and a lack of community gardens).

## 4. Hawaii should require all students complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid before graduating from high school, or complete a waiver.

No

### 4.a Comment

College is not for everyone and neither is college in America. With free college offered in other countries and no solution to help the current student borrowers' with their \$1.75 trillion dollars in debt, I cannot in good conscience support a requirement for yet another loan.

## 5. The Hawaii State Constitution provides for the "establishment, support and control of a statewide system of public schools," but does not guarantee quality education. Should the State Constitution be amended to provide quality education as a fundamental right? Should Hawaii students have a constitutional right to a quality education? Please explain your answer.

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Adding "provide quality education as a fundamental right" to the state constitution certainly comes from a place of good intentions and I can see why it would be appealing to do so. My concern is the interpretation of the word 'quality.' This may open the doors to a slippery slope of lawsuits of parents suing the State over what they deem to be a lack of a quality education. If multiple lawsuits are occurring, the legal fees, time, administrative efforts, and settlements could ultimately take millions of dollars away from the rest of our keiki for much needed programs like free meals, higher pay for teachers, and renovated classrooms and materials. Currently, only 3 other states (Florida, Illinois, Virginia) have the words "high quality" added to their constitution in regards to education, however they have very specific language as to what defines high quality. The Standards of Quality Board meets "from time to time" to determine what quality is and it costs the state money to fund such a board. In my opinion, I think this provision to the constitution, though noble in intent, could have unintended, costly legal consequences. I would also argue that Florida has recently passed several bills to ban books (including math books), so adding "high quality" to a state constitution does not actually, in practice, drive the kind of change that I believe is intended for this type of bill. Obviously, we all want high quality education for our keiki, but I think there might be other ways to go about doing this that would not lead to frivolous lawsuits or expensive sub committees. For example, specific bills that address targeted, modern needs that will lead to high quality education.

## **6. What will you do to improve the relationship between the Hawaii State Board of Education and legislature?**

Finding common ground is always a great way to start any relationship and finding ways to support the DOE to help our keiki is the way to do that. Frequent, quality, and honest communication between the legislature and the DOE is imperative to building trust and working together and I intend to work closely with parents, teachers, and the DOE alike to provide the best education we can to our keiki and set them up for success for the rest of their lives.

## **7. What leadership actions will you take for the Hawaii Department of Education, University of Hawaii system, and employers to work more effectively together?**

I would happily host a forum in which I would listen to leaders from the private sector and listen to what their concerns are with employees coming straight out of college and have UH and DOE leaders in the same room to discuss measures to meet those needs. For example, Hawaii has only law school. It is ranked 92nd in the nation. We need to encourage another college on the island to get accredited by the American Bar Association to give more students opportunities to go to law school and give law firm employers a more diverse pool of candidates to hire.

## **8. College going remains flat, with roughly 50% of recent Hawaii public high school graduates going on to college (2 or 4 year). How do you propose to raise these levels so Hawaii is more competitive with states like California, which has a nearly 65% rate?**

College should be more affordable, preferably free. Other first world countries provide free college and the US is the far behind the rest of the free world. Making knowledge a "pay to play" access system leads to an uninformed public. We cannot allow colleges to charge students ridiculous amounts of money and then complain when people don't want to take on that debt and instead turn to FaceBook or Reddit for information (more like "misinformation.") We then complain that they turn to the internet for their knowledge while we make college extremely inaccessible. Until we make college free or affordable, until we make the cost of living in Hawaii go down, and until wages are livable, I would not say that college is the best answer for every student.