

2022 HawaiiKidsCAN Action Fund Candidate Survey

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@kahaloaforkona

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

Our schools are safe places, pu'uhonua for children, providing food for the hungry, safety for the at risk, and listening caring staff and teachers for keiki who need it. It is an important place for our children before they even begin their lessons. Teachers and staff can make the difference that changes a child's lifelong trajectory. I have teachers that I will never forget because of the positive impact they made on my life.

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

Our campus buildings and facilities need to be upgraded across the state. Our kids feel supported when they feel they have school resources to learn and succeed. Teacher salaries and training should be improved. I think there should be an audit of the DOE budget. I feel like there may be spending that could be redirected towards facility improvements, teacher salary, training, classroom supplies, and technology. We can must supply more local food to school cafeterias. This would give our students access to healthier food while supporting their neighboring farmers and food producers in Hawai'i. It will teach students how to eat more local and change the tastes and food choices our students make. It is important that the DOE make a commitment to increasing local sourcing up to 50%. Access to Hawaiian culture and language education must also be expanded. There are not enough Hawaiian language immersion classrooms across Hawai'i. This form of education is important to provide children with educational choices in both of Hawai'i's official languages. As programs for Hawaiian culture and language expand in public education, training for teachers must be expanded as well. There are not enough teachers proficient in Hawaiian language to teach our children.

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.)?

I think an audit of the DOE's spending should be done. We need to understand where money is going between the top and the classroom. This would help to prioritize our most pressing needs at our schools, which include hiring more teachers, improving teacher salaries, providing teacher training and leadership programs, improving access to technology in the classroom, and more. Programs in STEM and Native Hawaiian education should be prioritized as well. Programs with partners like Purple Mai'a should be expanded. Native Hawaiian charter schools need further funding and support. The Office of Hawaiian Education needs more funding as well to advance Nā Hopena A'o, a department-wide framework to develop the skills, behaviors and dispositions that are reminiscent of Hawai'i's unique context, and to honor the qualities and values of the indigenous language and culture of Hawai'i.

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

Yes

4.a Comment

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As a former administrator in higher education recruitment and admissions, I know the value of higher education and the challenges students face to get into college. It is strenuous and there are many students who need support from others to get through the processes of obtaining acceptance into a school of higher education. Students who are potential first generation college attendees may not know they can afford college, until they complete the FAFSA. Their parents may be more informed and supportive if they understand the financial obligations.

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.

Yes. Our kuleana to our kids and to our future must be a top priority. Although a quality education is not defined, it would set the tone that the directive is more than status quo. Students have a right to a quality education in Hawai'i. When those language adjustments are made, decision making at the Department of Education and policy at the legislature must support the intentions of “quality education.” The language change must create policy and administration changes or the amendment will be in vain.

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

The BOE and the legislature could always improve their relationship. If needed, we should clarify roles and responsibilities to best use the talents and representation the board offers. As an elected official, I plan to reach out and have conversations with BOE members to learn how we can best collaborate and support our students. We are all leaders in the community trying to do our best for our children and for our communities. Open lines of communication can start to strengthen relationships.

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 currently serve on the chancellor's community advisory board for the Hawai'i Community College. In this role, you get to learn more about the needs of the community college in the region. I plan to build further relationships with all of our educational entities in Hawai'i, not just in my district. Education is a priority for me. I have a background working in higher education for a decade. I know the value of a public school education and a private school education. I want to create actions and policies that support our learners at all levels. I also believe in universal pre-K, and hope to be an advocate to ensure that this is implemented across Hawai'i. Mandating regionally responsive plans to manage the K-12 to higher ed transition that address workforce needs to ensure jobs for students will help with career pathways. Connecting with community programs and chambers of commerce that can facilitate these career pathway bridges are important areas to resource.

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?

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The DOE does a good job with early college programs. It is a great start for students and will save money for those that graduate from high school with a completed associates degree. We need to improve, encourage, and expand access to these programs. This is one example of encouraging more Hawai'i graduates to go to college. Students in Hawai'i need more support in school from college and career counselors. We need to expand career pathway opportunities in high school to encourage and excite students to want to continue programs in higher education. Parents in Hawai'i are not going to raise these levels. It will be with the desire of the students and the support they are receiving at school. It needs to be COOL to go to college. We should also have college graduates from the DOE, revisit their schools and share about their experiences. It motivates students to see successful alumni doing great things.



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