

# 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>
<p>Hawaii is fortunate to have a statewide single system of public education. As such, its budget is mostly uniform across the state ensuring equitable funding irrespective of rural/urban location or socio-economic demographics of communities. This is a benefit compared to many other jurisdictions where schools' budgets are often exclusively tied to revenues from local property taxes. Moreover, the state's educational policies are all consistent across the system as set by the Legislature or the Board of Education, with some allowance for flexibility by complex areas and individual schools to seek specific exemptions or innovate. As such, our public education system benefits from structural equity, consistency, and uniformity. Hawaii also does well at recognizing the wide diversity of our student population, from various cultures and ethnicities to different socio-economic levels and varying degrees of skills and capabilities. But these broad ranges and wide disparities are also a challenge as they require more resources to adequately address different educational needs for different students.</p>
<b>2. What should Hawaii do better with regards to K-12 public education?</b>

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I am optimistic that the recent decision to appoint Keith Hayashi as the permanent Superintendent will provide the DOE with continuity, stability, and a nuanced and informed local perspective. I believe he has a clear understanding of our education system and a clear record of success with his years as Principal Waipahu High School—of one of the largest high schools in the state. Thus, I am hopeful that we will provide more steady and decisive leadership from the Department of Education. I have consistently advocated for ways for our state to control and set its fixed costs so that we have more ability to direct discretionary funding. Should I prevail as Lt. Governor, I plan to use my knowledge and experience with the state budget to help ensure we improve and bolster our educational system by:  reducing the teacher-pupil ratio,  increasing professional development for teachers, and  educating the whole child with:  restoration/strengthening of CTE,  expansion of college prep curriculum; and  support for the arts.

### 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.)?

With our current teacher shortage and need to recruit and retain quality educators, I believe that the state needs to do more to address teachers' pay. I'm grateful that our revenues allowed me to take a leading role this session in addressing issues like wage compression in teacher pay categories and funding necessary teacher pay increases. However, there is still more to be done in severely understaffed areas like special education and Native Hawaiian immersion. Too many teachers do not make it past 5 years and exit because they do not see the benefits of a long teaching career. We need to change that in order to see a difference in our retention and recruitment rates for new teachers. This will require a large and clear commitment, but I believe it is achievable. After that, we can then focus our efforts on much-needed support for programs like increased technology and distance learning.

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

Unsure

#### 4.a Comment

Maybe. Mandating completion of the FAFSA should only be done if it is paired with adequate training, guidance, and supervision of students to ensure accuracy. The state should continue to do more to make college affordable. I firmly believe that which is why as Finance Chair, I not only helped to fund the establishment of the Hawaii Promise Program—making UH more affordable for lower income students—but also expanded it more recently to ensure that finances and affordability are not a barrier to achieving a college education.

### 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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While I am a strong supporter of giving our keiki a quality education, I am concerned that putting it the State Constitution will only provide limited substantive results. I generally do not support amending our state Constitution for specific issues because we do not want the bedrock of our state government changing with shifting times and circumstances. Even if we had an amendment providing that quality education is a fundamental right, I'm concerned because most rights in the Constitution, both federal and state, do not proactively, in and of themselves, promote the right — it protects against infringement. Thus, establishing the right in the Constitution, in and of itself, is unlikely to meaningfully accomplish the policy changes that are best made through the legislative process. I am also concerned because of the subjective use of the term "quality." While it seems obvious to strive to provide "quality education," the level of "quality" differs with each individual. In recent years, the strive for a "quality" preschool education has stalled the implementation of a universal preschool program. As such, I would not want the use of that word to be a further impediment to the much needed improvements in the system that we need to make. My concern is that we would end up with a nice sounding Constitutional right to a quality education, but one that would be largely unenforceable and more of an altruistic statement. Legislation during the legislative session is the most effective way to practically and tangibly accomplish a quality education.

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

The role of the Lt. Governor is one that is largely undefined except for the statutory duties of legal name changes and apostilles. Consequently, I support the idea of having the Governor direct the Lt. Governor to work directly with the Board of Education (BOE) and the Department of Education as a liaison and a point person to harness the resources of the broader state government to support the DOE and BOE in its mission to educate our children. Having served in the Legislature for 24 years, I am intimately familiar with the dynamics between the BOE and the Legislature. I believe there are ways both can work together more cooperatively. However, it will take someone who can call together the leadership of both sides in order to achieve more comprehensive planning and more effective implementation. You need someone like the Lt. Governor who has a broader reach and jurisdiction to be an effective liaison, intermediary, and support.

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

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If I am elected as Lieutenant Governor, I plan to ask the Governor to have a direct and active role in working with the Board of Education, the Superintendent and the Department of Education (DOE) so that we have a clearer and more consistent bridge between the policymaking educational body and the Administration and our education system. The DOE and the University of Hawaii (UH) are still subject to the internal processes for review, approval and release of funds from Budget and Finance and the Governor's office. With my deep understanding of the state budget, I can be very helpful for our educational agencies. Here are some of my past education initiatives and past actions that demonstrate my commitment and effectiveness on educational issues: □ Created and advocated for the recent preschool initiative that epitomizes coordinating various educational agencies to ensure the entire educational continuum is strong, articulated, and coordinating from preschool to university. □ Created the School Facilities Agency - helping the DOE to be able to better and more effectively construct and maintain facilities; helping to resolve the residual issues of when DAGS and DOE didn't effectively deal with construction, repair, and maintenance. □ Liaised with Governor, DOE, HSTA, and all other public sector unions to ensure that teacher compensation proposals passed this session □ Created and expanded the Hawaii Promise Program - helping UH and its administrators create more access to education □ Worked with UH administrators to restore many of the draconian cuts made by colleagues to UH faculty and operations - effectively liaising to fix Senate cutting of live bodies from UH □ Liaised with UH on temporary athletic field as Aloha Stadium undergoes demolition

## **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?**

First, we need to make higher education more affordable for Hawaii residents to make it more easily accessible. I am proud that our state has recently funded expansion of the Hawaii Promise Program for any eligible Hawaii resident to attend community college. But we need to do more in order to ensure that more residents are able to enroll and do not see their finances and the tuition as a barrier to them achieving an associate's or bachelor's degree. Second, we need to ensure that there are clear paths for high school students that may not want a 4-year college degree right after high school but are educated about the benefits of an associates degree through a community college. Some high schools do a good job of preparing students with additional options, but these offerings and the counseling are not consistent at all schools. As such, we need to provide sufficient vocational and technical (CTE) programs in the schools so student can identify their path to success and see the role that a degree can play in their future. Many CTE jobs are quality, high-paying trades that are in desperate need of workers. Finally, we need expand our early college programs to enable those students whose educational needs are more advanced than high school to begin achieving college credit based on their aptitudes. We also need to have more high schools are offering advanced college credit courses (such as AP courses and IB curriculum) so not only prepare students for the rigors of college, but also help to reduce the cost of college because their credits are applied to their college education.