



KULANUI O  
HAWAII MA HILO

Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani  
College of Hawaiian Language

<http://www.olelo.hawaii.edu/khuok/>

MOKUNA  
PAPAHANA KĀLAFI'KE  
Academic Studies Division

Muapuka  
Undergraduate Programs

Mulipuka  
Graduate Programs

Kula Maui Ola  
Laboratory Schools

Kahuawaiola  
Indigenous Teacher Education Program

MOKUNA  
HALE KUAMO'O  
Hawaiian Language Center

Ho'oiikaika Kumu  
Hawaiian Medium Teacher Development

Ho'omohala Ha'awina  
Lawelawe Pāpaho & Keleka'a'ike  
Curriculum Development,  
Media and Telecommunication Services

KE'ENA HO'OKELE KOLEKE  
Administrative Office

200 W. KĀWILI STREET  
HILO, HAWAII 96720-4091  
KELEPONA (Phone) (808) 932-7360  
KELEPA'I (Fax) (808) 932-7651

KE KULA 'O  
NĀWAHĪOKALANI'ŌPU'U  
Hawaiian Medium Laboratory School

16-120 'ŌPŪKAHA'IA ST, SUITE 1  
KEA'AU, HAWAII 96749  
KELEPONA (Phone) (808) 982-4260  
KELEPA'I (Fax) (808) 966-7821

He Mea Hai Ma Ka Papaha  
Kaulike Me Ke Pai Laemāuna

An Equal Opportunity/  
Affirmative Action Institution

April 15, 2021

To Legislators To Whom It May Concern  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

Aloha Members of the Alaska Legislature:

I write in support of legislation to facilitate Alaska Native language immersion programs such as House Bill 19.

My name is Dr. William H. Wilson. I am the senior faculty member of the Hawai'i State Hawaiian Language College, which is located on the Hilo campus of the University of Hawai'i. Our college is somewhat similar to the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, but was established quite a few years after the ANLC.

My academic background is in historical and applied linguistics, language revitalization, and indigenous languages in education. My wife, Dr. Kauanoe Kamanā, and I raised our two children totally in Hawaiian at home and educated them totally through Hawaiian immersion from preschool to grade 12. Upon high school graduation, they both went on to college and graduated – one from our own University of Hawai'i and one from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. Both today have successful careers in business and both continue to use Hawaiian as their regular language of conversation with each other and with us.

I begin with the above details to provide some personal evidence that education through endangered indigenous languages can be highly successful both in terms of maintaining a precious indigenous heritage of a state and in terms of academic and economic outcomes. Furthermore, those successes can be accomplished – indeed in my experience are best accomplished – through innovative mobilization of community resources in the manner called for in House Bill 19.

My own children are atypical in that their parents are university professors. Approximately 70 percent of the other Native Hawaiian children educated with them were from “free and reduced lunch” backgrounds. Over 95 percent were Native Hawaiian, generally a particularly low-performing population in state schools. Nearly 100 percent of the teachers in our children's school were themselves Native Hawaiian, and many were either uncertified or teaching at a grade level or in a subject level for which they had not been certified. We were working together, however, as a community in educating the children. First graduating students in 1999, the school they attended, Nāwahīoka-

lani'ōpu'u, (Nāwahī), has never had a dropout; and through the years over 85 percent of graduates have gone directly on to college.

While we are very proud of our children's school, similar results are being produced in the eight other Hawaiian immersion sites (or sets of classes in an English-medium school) that have reached through to the senior-high-school level. A portion of those sites teach partially through English beginning in middle school, and other like Nāwahī are taught totally through Hawaiian right through to the senior year. All sites are similar to Nāwahī, however, in the high proportion of students from lower economic backgrounds and in their enrollments being close to 100 percent Native Hawaiian. The state has published information that 20 percent of the teachers in schools teaching through Hawaiian statewide are uncertified compared to four percent uncertified teachers in the schools taught through English. Yet, outcomes relative to high school graduation and college attendance directly out of high school are higher in the schools taught through Hawaiian than in schools taught through English.

The statistics are as follows: Relative to "On Time High-School Graduation," students in Hawaiian Immersion Schools currently graduate at a rate eight percentage points higher than Native Hawaiians in English-medium schools (86 percent vs. 78 percent) and also three percentage-points higher than the rate for non-Native Hawaiian students in English-medium schools (86 percent vs. 83 percent). Relative to "Immediate Enrollment Into College," students from Hawaiian Immersion Schools currently enroll directly into college at a rate 15 percentage points higher than other Native Hawaiians who have graduated from high school (61 percent vs. 46 percent) and at a rate 21 percent higher than lower-income Native Hawaiian graduates as a whole (61 percent vs. 40 percent).

While I do not have official statistics, it is a widespread observation that students in Hawaiian Immersion have special strengths in overall "wellness." That is, they are well adjusted, polite, in better health, are contributors to society, and are statistically less likely to engage in risky behaviors. To give an example from the 2017 senior class at Nāwahī, both the division-one offensive and defensive football players of the year for our county of 190,800 people were from Nāwahī.

The Hawaiian-language-revitalization movement that produced these results began small, with handfuls of students in private-language-nest preschools. These preschools were taught by second-language learners and by fluent speakers, none of whom had state licensure. What the teachers had was knowledge of the language, knowledge of the culture, ability to connect with students, and a passion to share what they knew from a values base that had assured survival and success among Native Hawaiians for countless generations before.

From these roots, our Hawaiian-language education system slowly grew. We moved first into kindergarten and then added a grade a year through elementary school. We then moved on to middle school and through high school. We relied on the teachers that we were able to find – some licensed, many not. But we parents persisted in pursuing Hawaiian-language education for their children, and we saw good educational results. The movement spread from our community to others statewide, and new sites continue to open.

Our preschools began first as community initiatives that were modeled in part on Hawai'i immigrant-language schools and partly on New Zealand Māori language nests. During the development of our schools, we discovered that legal provisions allowing immigrant language schools to hire teachers without certification did not apply to the non-foreign Hawaiian language. Indeed, we also discovered that an earlier system of government education through the Hawaiian language was closed down by law in 1896. That legislation barring use of Hawaiian as a medium of education was still on the books when we began our efforts in the early 1980s.

We decided to go to the legislature for relief. The state education establishment was opposed to our request; but after three years of lobbying, the legislature produced two bills. One bill completely exempted preschools taught through Hawaiian from any required licensures of teachers, a regulation parallel to what already existed for foreign-language schools. Through the second bill, passed that same year in 1986, the state legislature lifted the legal barrier to use of Hawaiian as a medium of education in the public schools. As a result, in 1987 we were able to matriculate our older children from the language-nest preschool into the state school system as a special class – or stream – in a mainstream English school. We added the next grade in 1989 and grew grade by grade from there, graduating the first seniors in 1999. Our son was in the first graduating class. Eventually enrollment became large enough to establish Nāwahī as a separate school site.

The Hawai'i State Legislature has been a strong supporter since those initial bills. Legislative support has paved the way for further development of education through Hawaiian. Our teacher licensing law includes a variety of provisions accounting for the unique status of Hawaiian language immersion teachers. We have a special set of certifications for Hawaiian immersion that allow teachers to teach K-12 because the immersion sites are small and teachers need to teach at multiple levels. The law includes a provision for special support for teachers who teach in Hawaiian immersion programs and for those who teach on Ni'ihau (an isolated island where everyone speaks Hawaiian), allowing extra time as they work toward certification.

We have been very fortunate in Hawai'i to have a supportive legislature. The mainstream educational establishment of our state including the State Department of Education, while highly concerned for the academic progress for Native Hawaiians, was actually initially

opposed to Hawaiian immersion. Even today the educational mainstream in our state continues a tendency to follow practices and models that emanate from large national educational organizations based in the contiguous forty-eight states. This is why our legislators, grounded in the distinctiveness of our state and its communities, have been the ones providing leadership in opening up this Hawaiian immersion pathway. The legislature did not support Hawaiian immersion without us providing evidence that other countries had successfully implemented what we were advocating, but they did open up opportunities that would not have existed for us if the legislature had listened primarily to those from the educational mainstream who opposed Hawaiian immersion initiatives based on there being no such model within standard national educational practice in the contiguous forty-eight states.

In providing a legal pathway for Hawaiian immersion, our state legislature has greatly benefited Native Hawaiian communities and the state as a whole. I am very grateful for their groundbreaking support and the outcomes for my own family as well as for the larger population of our state. I see many parallels in what the Alaska State Legislature is doing with House Bill 19. I commend your work in supporting Alaska Native communities that are seeking to grow Alaska Native language immersion education. I wish you all the success in your endeavors and would be happy to help in any way where our experiences here and some of the research of our College might be useful.



Dr. William H. Wilson  
Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language  
University of Hawai'i at Hilo



Association of Alaska School Boards  
1111 West 9<sup>th</sup> Street  
Juneau, AK 99801

April 15, 2021

RE: Letter of Support for HB 19 – Limited Teacher Certificates; Languages

The Association of Alaska School Boards is pleased to offer a letter of support for HB 19, to allow for the issuance of a limited teaching certificate for instructors of indigenous languages.

The Association of Alaska School Boards is a statewide organization that advocates for children and youth by assisting school boards in providing quality public education, focused on student achievement, through effective local governance. Our membership consists of over 330 board members across Alaska, and our 15 member Board of Directors represents all regions of the state.

AASB's Delegate Assembly has six active resolutions supporting the preservation of Alaska's indigenous languages. The Association of Alaska School Boards has demonstrated a sustained commitment to promoting Alaska Native language program development, encouraging the adoption of culturally responsive curriculum, and urging the hiring of qualified Alaska Native educators – all with a mind toward supporting the academic success and improved graduation rates of Alaska Native students.

Language immersion education is an effective means of achieving these stated goals and priorities, but our members regularly encounter challenges when hiring for immersion schools. House Bill 19 would provide crucial flexibility for school districts to employ fluent educators – particularly in Alaska Native languages – who are best-suited for language immersion programs.

We strongly encourage your support for HB 19.

Katie Oliver, President

Lon D. Garrison, Executive Director

### **5.3 ALASKA NATIVE INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT**

AASB supports state funding for staff training, program development and materials preparation to promote Alaska Native Indigenous language instruction for those districts that desire Alaska Native Indigenous language programs. AASB also urges Congress to clarify the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to bring it into compliance with the Native American Languages Act and to support opportunities for American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander students to retain and use Native American languages, including adequate funding for programs that can support Alaska Native Indigenous language instruction.

**Rationale.** The heritage languages of the Indigenous Peoples of the United States have become endangered. The extinction of languages would further erode the rich heritage of the Indigenous Peoples of the United States. The technology exists to provide satellite language instruction in the Native tongues to communities throughout the United States. If we as a nation do not respond to this need to preserve this rich linguistic heritage, these languages will become extinct. Financial support from the government for the preservation of Native languages would enable the use of a technology that has helped speed the loss of indigenous languages to reverse that trend. In today's modern world technology and global issues make it necessary for our children to become proficient in English. Learning English, however, should not be at the expense of indigenous language programs.

### **5.7 REQUESTING THE ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT TO PROVIDE STANDARDS-BASED ASSESSMENTS IN ALASKA NATIVE INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES**

AASB requests the state to provide standardized assessments in the Alaska Native indigenous languages, as requested by the individual districts.

**Rationale.** Students who have a strong first language in their ethnic group perform better academically. Students who learn English as a second language with a strong first language do better academically on standardized tests. Culturally responsive curriculum that uses the local language and cultural knowledge provides the foundation for the rest of the curriculum and implements the goals of the State of Alaska's Cultural Standards, as well as the State of Alaska Content and Performance Standards.

### **5.9 URGING FLEXIBILITY IN TESTING TO SUPPORT INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE PROGRAMS**

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to join with school districts in opposing those aspects of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that are detrimental to rural, largely Alaska Native school districts, including testing programs that inaccurately assess Alaska Native and rural Alaska students. In addition, AASB urges the state to reexamine its own testing programs with regard to these issues.

**Rationale.** The current ESEA reauthorization process is an opportunity to improve the existing law. Since 2001, ESEA has lacked the flexibility needed to support English Language Learners in indigenous communities. ELL programs disadvantage indigenous communities that wish to perpetuate their values, culture and traditions in their public schools through their language. ELL mandates inaccurately assess Alaska Native students and inadvertently affect language programs negatively.

## **5.12 URGING CONTINUATION OF THE ALASKA NATIVE EDUCATION ACT**

AASB urges Congress and the President to support continuation of the Alaska Native Educational Equity, Support and Assistance Act as a critical way of engaging families and communities to more effectively support student success and align school and community efforts to create safe, healthy, culturally responsive and opportunity-rich environments.

**Rationale.** Since its adoption in 2002 as Title 7 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (NCLB), the Alaska Native Education Act has provided supplemental benefits to Alaska school districts and Alaska Native students. Congress recognized then that too many Alaska Native children enter and leave the school system with serious educational handicaps, including low test scores and high dropout rates. The Alaska Native Education Act was enacted and funded to address these problems through improved curricula, better teaching practices, family literacy programs, cultural exchanges, community engagement programs and career preparation activities.

The Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement is a statewide initiative that effectively enlists families, school boards, districts, schools, educators, Alaska native organizations, businesses, community organizations, artists and arts organizations, faith communities, and young people themselves in improving the academic and social outcomes for youth. The success of this investment in Alaska Native students is evident in a 2009 report by the American Institutes for Research. The report on the impact of the Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement (Alaska ICE), which is funded through the Alaska Native Education Act, shows positive changes, especially for Native students, in schools and communities supported by Alaska ICE, including an increased level of expectations of Native students, improvements in school climate, increased levels of adult support for youth in the community, significantly reduced risk behaviors (including vandalism, fights, alcohol and drug use) and higher proficiency rates on statewide academic assessments.

## **5.28 SUPPORTING THE PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION OF ALASKA NATIVE INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES**

As stated in Belief Statement B.11, AASB honors and celebrates the rich cultural, ethnic and linguistic heritage of Alaska Native people and supports the preservation and restoration of indigenous languages across the state. In recognition of the linguistic emergency for the twenty-one surviving Alaska Native Indigenous languages declared on September 23, 2018 in Administrative Order No. 300, AASB urges support from the Alaska Legislature, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development and all accredited higher education systems.

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to support local school districts in their efforts to integrate Alaska Native Indigenous languages across all age levels through additional, targeted funding allocations. This funding will support the development of curriculum, as well as the training, certification and hiring of qualified, fluent Alaska Native Indigenous language educators.

AASB urges the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development to review its policies regarding requirements to provide support and encouragement to Alaska Indigenous Natives to seek Type M Certificates, and form community partnerships in the developmental process for Type M Portable certification in Alaska Native Indigenous languages.

AASB encourages all accredited higher education systems to reinvigorate and expand its programs in all Alaska Native Indigenous languages. These programs are instrumental in the preservation of our state's indigenous languages.

**Rationale:** Alaska Native Indigenous languages have been lost over many years of English-only instruction in our schools. It is incumbent upon our school systems to help restore this loss. The addition of targeted funding for schools in response to this emergency is critical in restoring and stopping the loss of Alaska Native Indigenous languages.

In many regions of the state, the most qualified instructor candidates for Alaska Native Indigenous languages are often elders and are barred from full teacher certification due to a lack of instruction in areas such as upper level mathematics and English, areas that are irrelevant to the subject matter. When the speakers of a language possessing the greatest knowledge of its vocabulary and most understanding of its nuances are barred from becoming instructors by regulations created for instruction in another language, it is appropriate to review and update those regulations.

University programs, such as the Alaska Native Language Center, are critical in the preparation of language instructors and supporting the development of curriculum and program.

## **5.29 URGING A STATEWIDE ANNUAL ALASKA INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE CONFERENCE**

AASB urges the Governor of Alaska, the State Legislature and the State Board of Education to provide an annual Alaska Indigenous Language Conference that will benefit the indigenous Alaskan languages.



**Rationale:** The State of Alaska signed House Bill 216, October 23, 2014, twenty Alaska Native languages as official languages for the State of Alaska. The Governor of Alaska, September 23, 2018 declared an emergency for Alaska Native languages. Alaska Indigenous Language instructional staff do not have a venue where they can interact and collaborate with fellow language and cultural Instructors from across the State. An Alaska Indigenous Language Statewide Conference would provide that opportunity.



# Anchorage School District

## Education Center

5530 E. Northern Lights Blvd. • Anchorage, AK 99504 • 907-742-4000 • [www.asdk12.org](http://www.asdk12.org)

April 22, 2021

Alaska State Legislature  
Alaska State Capitol  
120 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 3  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Dear Members of the 32nd Alaska Legislature:

I am writing as superintendent of the Anchorage School District (ASD) to express support for House Bill 19 pertaining to limited teacher certificates for language immersion programs.

ASD has a longstanding history with dual language immersion programs. Our first program was Japanese, beginning in 1989. Since then, we have added two Spanish programs and we are home to the nation's very first Russian immersion program. We also have a K-8 German immersion charter school with a continuation strand at Service High School.

The aforementioned programs all serve K-12 students. Five years ago, we launched a Mandarin Chinese immersion program (currently K-4), with plans to expand each year until it is also a K-12 program. In 2018, we launched a Yup'ik immersion program using a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Indian Education. This is the first indigenous language immersion program in an urban setting in our nation. Finally, we opened a French immersion program in 2019 with plans to expand annually.

I provide this background to illustrate my district's commitment to language programs, all of which have stemmed from community interest and grassroots efforts over the years. In addition to our immersion programs, ASD offers language classes at its middle and high schools. We offer Level I through Advanced Placement in Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish, as well as Level I-IV in American Sign Language. Approximately 8,000 ASD students are enrolled in second language coursework, with roughly 2,500 students in our dual language immersion programs.

With multiple language programs in place, our ability to hire fully qualified teachers with the high level of language proficiency needed to teach in an immersion program is an ongoing challenge. Very rarely do we have a pool of candidates—teachers with native or near-native language proficiency who are eligible to be certificated under existing regulations from which to draw, and we find ourselves constantly recruiting to fill these “hard to fill” vacancies.

ASD has taken advantage of DEED's “program enrollment” option, which requires candidates to enroll in a teacher education program while they are teaching full-time. This has not been easy on our teachers who are doing so. We also recognize that DEED has recently developed a Type W limited certificate. However, it still requires a teacher preparation program.

*Educating All Students for Success in Life*

**Anchorage School Board** Elisa Vakalis, President  
Margo Bellamy, Vice President  
Andy Holleman, Clerk

Starr Marsett, Treasurer  
Dave Donley

Alisha Hilde  
Deena Mitchell

**Superintendent** Dr. Deena Bishop

I am not suggesting that we support applicants who have not completed a teacher education program; however, sometimes it is impossible to find certificated candidates who have the language proficiency needed for the position *and* who have also completed a teacher preparation program. It is worth noting that these candidates are highly educated individuals, many of whom hold advanced degrees from their home countries, including engineers, doctors, lawyers, and accountants. We have also found that some of our candidates have teaching degrees and/or teaching experience in their home country, but since their teacher education programs do not necessarily align with a traditional teacher education program in the US, they struggle with obtaining a teacher certificate through DEED.

ASD is supportive of the flexibility that HB 19 offers with respect to sharing with the State Board of Education our experience and challenges with operating immersion programs. We support HB 19 and the creation of a one-year limited certificate for "instruction in a language other than English." ASD welcomes the opportunity to provide input on the certificate as the State Board develops the regulations. ASD foresees using limited certificates in rare circumstances.

HB 19 provides the flexibility needed to ensure that ASD has native or near-native speakers of our given immersion languages in the classroom. This option will be helpful as we continue to provide the highest quality language immersion education possible, ensuring that hired individuals have the content knowledge and subject area expertise required to teach in their assigned area.

Thank you for allowing me to comment in support of HB 19. Please let me know if you have questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Deena M. Bishop', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Deena M. Bishop, Ed.D.  
Superintendent



Alaska Native Sisterhood Glacier Valley Camp 70

P.O. Box 20213 Juneau, Alaska 99802

January 13, 2022

2021-22  
ANS Camp 70  
Officers

Desmona Stevick  
*President*

Alicia Maryott  
*1<sup>st</sup> Vice President*

Pat Walker  
*2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President*

Anne Fuller  
*Secretary*

Maridon Boario  
*Treasurer*

Andrea Cesar  
*Sgt.-at-Arms*

Kevin Allen  
Bev Russell  
*Camp Council*

This is a comment in support of HB19, “An Act relating to instruction in a language other than English; and establishing limited language immersion teacher certificates”.

We are the Alaska Native Sisterhood Glacier Valley Camp 70. We are an organization focused on improving public education and increasing civic engagement.

This bill supports culturally relevant education. All of us know that the schools in Alaska (in various systems) did discourage the teaching of Indigenous languages over many decades. The language immersion classrooms and programs are important today. World-views are illuminated and made accessible by using language (vocabulary, diction, grammar, rhetoric, literature).

Please support the speakers of Indigenous languages who are working with our children. This is a careful written bill and is appropriate for the current situation. All our children benefit from place-based, culturally responsive, intellectually challenging education. We hope the Senate Education Committee takes action to make limited language immersion teacher certificates available.

Thank you,

Anne Fuller  
Secretary, ANS 70



## Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council

19 January 2021

The Honorable Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins  
House of Representatives  
State Capitol Room 411  
Juneau AK, 99801

Dear Representative Kreiss-Tomkins,

The Alaska Native Language Preservation & Advisory Council strongly supports the passage of HB 19, improving the opportunities for high-quality instruction in languages other than English and limited teacher certificates. Particularly for language immersion education, the most qualified instructors may not have an Alaskan teacher certificate. Nonetheless, fifty years of academic research supports the value of language immersion education in 1) increasing students' fluency in English and the immersion languages, 2) increasing students' educational scores in mathematics, science, and social studies, and 3) increasing students' IQs.

While certificated teachers are preferred, Alaska has its own, particular challenges in filling the needed positions. This bill allows school boards to request limited teacher certification for individuals who otherwise have demonstrated their competency at teaching through a language other than English. With the urgent need for more language immersion schools in Alaska—and particularly for Alaska Native language immersion schools—Alaska needs the flexibility that this legislation will provide if we are to put the quality of our children's education first.

Additionally, the Council supports this bill as a needed step in recognizing the invaluable knowledge and expertise that Alaska Native language and culture teachers bring to schools in Alaska.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "April Counciller".

April Counciller  
ANLPAC Chair

Sen. Donald Olson  
(Inupiaq)

Rep. Andi Story

April Counciller, Chair  
(Alutiiq)

Annette Evans Smith, Vice-Chair  
(Athabaskan, Alutiiq, Yup'ik)

Bernadette Yaayuk  
Alvanna-Stimpfle (Inupiaq)

Walkie Charles  
(Yup'ik)

X'unei Lance Twitchell  
(Tlingit/Haida/Yup'ik/Sami)