



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

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February 18, 2026

Senator Donna Mercado Kim
Hawaii State Senate
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 218
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Senator Kim:

You took to the floor of the state Senate yesterday to insult principals and educational officers of our public schools, calling them rude and disrespectful for simply showing up to the Education Committee's hearing on Friday, Feb. 13 and sharing their opinions.

The HGEA strongly condemns your attack on their First Amendment right to free speech and your attempts to twist their civic engagement into ammunition to advance your personal upsets and agenda. Your deplorable floor speech fits with your pattern of lashing out when you are questioned and opposed — it is downright Trumpian.

Here is what is disrespectful: Using your personal vendetta against school officials in your district for not agreeing or kowtowing to you. Your attempt to use your position to dismantle the organizational structure of our school system is an extreme means of attacking two school principals and their Complex Area Superintendent. This measure, SB 3334, would upend the structure of public schools, and has nothing to do with making education better for the kids of Hawaii. It has everything to do with your penchant for authoritarianism, bullying and settling scores. The only person using “mob-like tactics” is you.

The DOE did not organize principals and vice principals to show up en masse to your hearing, the HGEA did. And they did not boo other testifiers; they booed during the disrespectful and condescending questioning of Deputy Superintendent Heidi Armstrong and other DOE officials. We have talked with some of those in attendance on Friday, and contrary to your claims, our members report to us that no sergeant at arms attempted to quiet or reprimand them in any way. They further dispute your claim that boos were directed at other testifiers.

Sadly, this episode is nothing new for you. You have made a career out of bullying public employees. Educators in your district tell us that you have a habit of showing up to their schools unannounced. They are forced to endure your grief and unreasonable demands. You personally target school leaders, micromanage their work, and disrespect the job they are doing - and yet you are quick to take credit for their successes. I would remind you that principals, vice principals and all educational officers are highly credentialed, highly educated and experienced in managing schools; you are not.

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The presence of dozens of educational officers and other DOE employees on Friday set a strong example for Hawaii students about what civic engagement and exercising our First Amendment rights is all about. This is exactly the fight playing out across our country, where some folk in power are trying to censor the voices of the people and squelch their opposition. I hope it is apparent that the HGEA will not stand for this type of bullying and attempted censorship in Hawaii. You can rest assured that we will defend our right to free speech, and that our elected representatives have not heard the last of us.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Randy Perreira', written over the typed name.

Randy Perreira

Executive Director

Hawaii Government Employees Association

cc: Senators, Hawaii State Legislature