

Arts Advocacy Resource Library | Sample Testimony & Letters

The samples below are real statements written in support of the **Artists-in-the-Schools (AITS) Program**, administered by the Hawai'i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts.

What makes these examples effective?

Each one includes a **personal story, concrete impact, or real experience**. This is what makes testimony memorable and persuasive.

Lawmakers pay special attention to:

- Testimony from **constituents in their district**
- **Specific examples** (not general opinions)
- Clear, respectful **calls to action**

Use these samples as a guide—but always speak in your own voice.

Tips for Writing Impactful Testimony

- Start with who you are (educator, parent, student, artist, organization)
 - Name the bill and your position (support/oppose)
 - Share a specific story or example
 - Connect to broader impact (students, community, economy)
 - Be concise and respectful
 - End with a clear ask (e.g., “Please support this bill”)
-

Example 1: Individual Legislative Testimony

Testimony in Support of HB2437

Relating to Arts Education | Artists-in-the-Schools (AITS)

Submitted by Leslie Baldrige

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to strongly urge continued and increased funding for professional teaching artists in our elementary school classrooms.

While core subjects like math and literacy are foundational, teaching artists provide the “**connective tissue**” that helps students fully engage with learning. They do not simply teach art—they teach students how to think creatively, persevere through challenges, and collaborate with others.

Research and classroom experience show three key benefits:

- **Bridging the Achievement Gap:** Arts provide accessible entry points for English Language Learners and students with diverse learning styles.
- **Social-Emotional Development:** Students build essential life skills such as empathy, resilience, and confidence.
- **Academic Reinforcement:** Integrating arts into subjects like history or math makes abstract concepts tangible and memorable.

Teaching artists also support classroom educators by:

- Bringing fresh, relevant perspectives into the curriculum

- Strengthening school culture and reducing burnout
- Preparing students with the creative and critical thinking skills needed in today’s workforce

Funding teaching artists is not an “extra”—it is an investment in the **cognitive, emotional, and creative development of our students**.

I respectfully urge you to support this funding and ensure every child has access to high-quality arts education through the AITS program.

Thank you for your consideration,

Leslie Baldrige
Kihei Charter School
Elementary/Special Education Director

Example 2: Organizational Testimony

Testimony in Support of HB2437

Relating to Arts Education | Artists-in-the-Schools (AITS)

Submitted by Hawai'i Arts Alliance

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

Hawai'i Arts Alliance strongly supports HB2437 (HD1). This bill invests in the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts' Artists-in-the-Schools (AITS) program, which embeds professional teaching artists in classrooms to support student engagement, whole-child development, and essential 21st-century skills.

Through our statewide work, we see firsthand the powerful impact teaching artists have on students and school communities. Currently, approximately **135 schools out of Hawai'i's roughly 300 public and charter schools** benefit from AITS each year. While this reach is meaningful, it also highlights how many schools remain unserved.

Additional funding will:

- Stabilize existing school partnerships
- Expand access to underserved communities
- Ensure more students across all islands benefit from arts education

Arts education belongs in every classroom. It is foundational to student success, creativity, and connection. We respectfully urge your support of HB2437.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Gaye Humphrey
Executive Director
Hawai'i Arts Alliance

Example 3: Letter Inviting Lawmakers to Visit

Letter in Support of AITS

Daniel A. Kelin II

Director of Drama Education, Honolulu Theatre for Youth

Aloha e Representative Gedeon, I hope this message finds you well, and mahalo for your service to our community.

My name is Daniel A. Kelin II, and I serve as Director of Drama Education at Honolulu Theatre for Youth. For over 30 years, I have led arts residencies and workshops for tens of thousands of students across Hawai'i.

Through the Artists-in-the-Schools (AITS) program, I have seen firsthand how arts education helps students grow into confident, creative, and collaborative individuals.

One educator shared:

"The AITS residency has become part of our school culture and a core memory for our youngest students."

Another noted the program's inclusivity:

"Students who were non-English speakers were fully engaged through movement, visual storytelling, and humor."

These are not just arts experiences—they are **lifelong learning moments**.

However, the AITS program now faces potential funding reductions. A loss of funding would mean the end of long-standing partnerships with schools—relationships built over decades.

I would welcome the opportunity to deepen your understanding of this work and invite you to visit a residency in action. Our team will be working at Haha'ione Elementary School from December 1–12, generally between 12:30–2:00 PM. It would be an honor to host you for a brief visit.

Mahalo nui loa for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Daniel A. Kelin II