

## BFED Committee

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**From:** County Clerk  
**Sent:** Friday, March 20, 2026 7:45 AM  
**To:** BFED Committee  
**Subject:** FW: Testimony in Support of MEDB STEMworks Funding

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**From:** Peka Vares <vjadekapeka@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 19, 2026 7:52 PM  
**To:** County Clerk <County.Clerk@mauicounty.us>  
**Cc:** Lalaine Pasion <lalaine@medb.org>; Bronson Bajo <bronsonbajo@gmail.com>  
**Subject:** Testimony in Support of MEDB STEMworks Funding

You don't often get email from [vjadekapeka@gmail.com](mailto:vjadekapeka@gmail.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

Aloha,

This is another Testimony from my daughter Hulale'a Vares.  
Mahalo

Aloha,

My name is Hulale'a Vares. I am a 7th grader at KALAMA School, and I want to say I strongly support funding for STEMworks.

At first I thought \*\*STEM\*\* (science, tech, engineering, math) was like... robots, calculators, and suffering. But STEM helped me realize hula is already full of STEM—just in a cool way, not a boring worksheet way.

This year we learned “Kananaka,” we didn't just dance—we had to count the beats (like 1,2 and 3,4) so our movements matched the rhythm, which is really using math and patterns. Our hand motions needed to be synchronized and if they weren't we would fix parts that didn't work, just like engineering where you test and improve. We used geometry by spacing ourselves and facing the right directions so we wouldn't bump into each other. The mele connects to Lahaina and the ocean, so learning about waves, wind, and how the shoreline changes helped us understand the story like science does. We also noticed parts of the dance repeats, like loops in coding, which made it easier to remember.

Honesty, it made school feel more real and less like random stuff you memorize for test. It's cool to learn math, science, and history by doing something that I love and it made me way more confident on and off the stage. Plus, I get to be proud of who I am while learning new skills.

Hula is life; it's where I understand and connect to the world around me in my own unique way.

Please keep funding so more kids can learn in ways that connect to our culture and our community. More students should get to have this kind of learning — it actually works.

Mahalo for your time and for supporting students like me!

Me ke aloha,  
Hulale'a Vares  
7th Grade, KALAMA School

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**From:** County Clerk  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 19, 2026 3:42 PM  
**To:** BFED Committee  
**Subject:** FW: Testimony in Support of MEDB STEMworks Funding

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**From:** Lalaine Pasion <lalaine@medb.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 19, 2026 3:41 PM  
**To:** Peka Vares <vjadekapeka@gmail.com>  
**Cc:** County Clerk <County.Clerk@mauicounty.us>; Bronson Bajo <bronsonbajo@gmail.com>  
**Subject:** Re: Testimony in Support of MEDB STEMworks Funding

You don't often get email from [lalaine@medb.org](mailto:lalaine@medb.org). [Learn why this is important](#)

Mahalo Peka and Hula for writing a meaningful testimony!

On Mar 19, 2026, at 2:47 PM, Peka Vares <[vjadekapeka@gmail.com](mailto:vjadekapeka@gmail.com)> wrote:

Aloha kākou!

‘O Ihikapalaumaewa ku‘u one hānau  
‘O Haleakalā ku‘u mauna  
‘O Ka Ua Lanipā‘ina ku‘u ua  
‘O Hau ku‘u makani  
‘O Kapeka ku‘u inoa

Ihikapalaumaewa is my birth place  
Haleakalā is my beloved mountain  
Ka Ua Lanipā‘ina is my sweet rain  
Hau is my treasured wind  
My name is Kapeka

And, I live in Kula, Maui. I am writing in strong support of continued funding for MEDB STEMworks.

My daughter, Hulale‘a (“Hula”), participates in the STEM hula program at Kalama School, and this is her second year. She chose to return because last year was meaningful and truly impactful for her.

What I appreciate most is the pilina this program builds—pilina to our culture, to place, to each other, and to learning. In our ‘ohana, hula is passed down through generations (we are fifth-generation hula dancers), so hula is not just an activity; it is how we stay

connected. This program strengthens that connection while also helping students feel seen and proud of who they are.

Hula makes STEM feel practical and familiar. In STEM, students learn to observe carefully, test ideas, measure results, and make improvements. That same process happens in hula every time students learn a dance.

For example, students have to keep time with the music and each other (counting and patterns), stay in the right spacing and formations (geometry and measurement), and use consistent strength and control in their movements so the dance looks the same from start to finish (practice, feedback, and refinement). When something is off—timing, spacing, or synchronization—they look for the cause, make a small change, and try again. That is the same “test and improve” cycle used in science and engineering.

Through STEM Hulale‘a, my daughter started to understand that STEM isn’t separate from her life it’s a way of thinking and problem-solving that she is already using in something she loves.

Please continue to support MEDB STEMworks funding so more Maui students can experience learning that honors Hawai‘i’s culture, builds pilina, and develops strong STEM skills for their future.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,  
Kapeka Vares  
Kula, Maui

## BFED Committee

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**From:** County Clerk  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 19, 2026 2:58 PM  
**To:** BFED Committee  
**Subject:** FW: Testimony in Support of MEDB STEMworks Funding

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**From:** Peka Vares <vjadekapeka@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 19, 2026 2:48 PM  
**To:** County Clerk <County.Clerk@mauicounty.us>  
**Cc:** Lalaine Pasion <lalaine@medb.org>; Bronson Bajo <bronsonbajo@gmail.com>  
**Subject:** Testimony in Support of MEDB STEMworks Funding

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