



# MidWeek

This column by Senator Michelle Kidani was published in MidWeek's West Oahu VOICE section on Wednesday, October 21, 2015.

## **Real traffic relief is on the way**

Remember Van Pool Hawaii? When Federal and State funding for the ride sharing program expired a few years ago, that service was operating 300 vans that transported 1,600 commuters island wide. In the past two legislative sessions I fought for \$500,000 in state funding for the city to re-establish ride sharing as a viable alternative for Oahu motorists. A recent meeting with Honolulu City Managing Director Roy Amemiya and Transportation Services Director Mike Formby brought encouraging assurances that the city plans to begin such a program perhaps as early as March. I appreciate Mayor Caldwell's assistance in moving forward with this project and will continue to push for state support for real ways we can work together to relieve traffic congestion.

## **Preparing for the 2016 Legislative Session**

In just three short months, the Legislature will convene its regular 60-day working session at the State Capitol. Lawmakers have been preparing for this official business part of our responsibilities during the last few months, including public briefings on several matters.

As Chair of the Senate's Committee on Education, I have been meeting with principals from to talk story and hear concerns. Principals are closest to the action on their campuses and play an important role in the planning process.

I also convened an informational briefing with my counterpart, House Education Chair Representative Roy Takumi, to learn about pilot programs in five areas across the state designed to assure that students are reading at appropriate levels by third grade. Later, our two committees also received an update on the State Public Charter School Commission standards for evaluating charter school performance as school contracts come up for renewal.

While there are no charter school campuses within the boundaries of my Senate District 18, one charter school – the Hawaii Technology Academy – holds its classes on Moloalo Street in Waipahu town, in the district represented by my colleagues Senator Clarence Nishihara and Representative Henry Aquino. We all share the responsibility to see that this campus and the other 33 charter schools statewide are performing at the highest possible level and are accountable for the DOE funding made available to them. I anticipate further public hearings on charter schools as our session gets underway in January.

This coming session I will also serve as Vice Chair of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Health, and as a member of the Committees on Higher Education and the Arts, and Transportation and Energy.

## **Follow up – Waipahu High's Career Academies**

Last month I reported on the successes enjoyed by students in Waipahu High School's several career academies. Just a few days after two WHS programs received full national accreditation, the State Department of Education announced that Hawaii is among a group of 17 states that are fully committing to making career readiness a higher priority. Through their positive experiences in these kinds of programs, students and teachers at Waipahu have demonstrated real leadership in preparing for success beyond high school. We're so proud that our schools have been able to create and grow these Small Learning Communities that allow our exceptional young men and women to show their talents.

