



MidWeek

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A heartwarming success

It is always gratifying to see the tangible results of my legislative work, especially when those results happen quickly. I came up with a new approach to dealing with the critical shortage of qualified, licensed teachers for our public school classrooms, especially at hard-to-staff campuses. I wanted to support folks already in the DOE system – substitute teachers, emergency hires and Education Assistants – who were ready to take a next step and earn their teacher licenses. I pushed for scholarship funds which were allocated in the budget we approved in the 2017 legislative session, and the College of Education moved quickly to develop an online and after-hours class schedule to accommodate these working professionals.

Just a few days ago, I was on the UH Manoa campus for orientation of the first group of more than 50 individuals who enrolled in the “Grow Our Own” program. It was an emotional and heartwarming moment – not only for me, but also for the new students. Many of them approached me, some with tears in their eyes, to let me know that they were so grateful for this opportunity for professional improvement. I could feel their passion for education, and for the students in their schools and classrooms, and I am so pleased to have been a part of this innovative approach to increasing and improving our corps of dedicated teachers.

I should note that in this first group of teacher-students seven are from the Mililani/Waipahu area. The College of Education says there is already a waiting list for the next group’s sessions. I plan to aggressively advocate for additional funding to support the “Grow Our Own” initiative.

Our 2018 Legislative session begins this week. We’ll be taking a look at the second year of the two-year budget we approved last year to make sure priorities are being addressed and to adjust allocations to state programs as necessary. As chair of the Senate’s Committee on Education, I plan to focus on ways to make sure schools can best support our students and teachers as they adapt to 21st century learning environments.

By the way, we are about to welcome the Year of the Dog in the Asian lunar calendar cycle. According to one interpretive source, the Dog is the symbol of intelligence and protection, and 2018 should be a good time for lifestyle changes and for the start of new business ventures. That sends a message of hope, and perhaps that’s a good watchword for our work as lawmakers as our session begins this week. ***Kung Hee Fat Choy!***



2018—Year of the Dog

You are invited

This year’s annual Character Counts Fair is scheduled for Friday evening, February 2, at Mililani High School’s cafeteria. All public schools in Mililani have integrated this great values-education program into their daily school experiences, and the Fair is a wonderful opportunity for students and their families to share the ways in which they embrace the “six pillars” - Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship. ***Mahalo to our Central District Teacher of the Year Gregg Iha for his guidance and hard work to implement this program that has really taken hold in Mililani. Character Counts Fair activities and display booths open at 5 pm – see you there!***