



Halau Kū Māna

February 3, 2008

In support of the intent of HB1203

Aloha Chair Takumi, Vice Chair Berg and members of the House Committee on Education,

My name is Keola Nakanishi, Executive Director/Co-Founder of Halau Ku Mana Public Charter School. Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in support of HB2561.

Facilities has been our first and foremost obstacle to even greater success than what we've already achieved. And while we have experienced successes with our keiki beyond our wildest expectations, not receiving facilities support (with the per pupil funding last year as an exception, mahalo!) has put us constantly in survival and burnout mode. Words cannot explain, the impacts on morale, relations, and all the time, energy, and money we have for our real jobs (curriculum, overseeing staff, recruiting/retaining students, fundraising, etc). Thus it inevitably impacts the quality of our program, and constantly threatens our survival. This is an understatement.

Many of you know by now we have constantly hopped homes, and had to compromise our situation to respect our landlords or make do with the space allotted to us. Examples - our keiki having to be quiet and indoors during recess, our library doubling as a classroom, our storage room doubling as a confidential meeting room, the 'lobby' serving as our cafeteria, playground, classroom and storage, and many of our classes under tents.

As of this school year, we are blessed with a 30-year lease, by far more stability than our one-year agreements at our last 3 sites. Still, after fundraising and saving nearly one million dollars over the last 8 years against all odds (we already juggle a dozen grants on average per year, to sustain operations), these monies have bought us temporary facilities, mostly trailers 25+ years old (donated and refurbished). We are not sure how many years this will last, but that length of time is our timeline to fundraise, permit, and build a long-term facility. Our temporary facility does not fit all our students during certain parts of the week when we *don't* have half the students at their auxillary outdoor learning labs, so we still have classes under tents. We don't have a water fountain or shower (students get muddy and wet with our curriculum!), and no kitchenette so we can serve lunch on campus (instead we invest much extra time and money to have our lunch served/packaged off-site, and transported here).

Thus, we support all elements of HB1203 and any other bill, that will improve support to charter schools in the area of facilities.

If you haven't had a chance yet, I strongly and humbly encourage you each to review what CSAO has provided, as an easy to read yet thorough summary of what other states are doing for charter school facilities. More than showing how nearly all states do so much more, it will give lots of great ideas to consider, on what Hawaii can do, to support innovation, community-based education, and success.

Our message is simple and clear, and it is shared by thousands in the Hawaiian and charter school communities. This message is one that all charter school directors agreed on in the past. The bill(s) we support today and throughout this and prior Sessions, have components for positive change in these areas:

1. **Equitable and ample funding for all public schools** - Mainstream or charter, city or country, every child is entitled to quality education, their `ohana are taxpayers. For this to be clearly determined and implemented, we need transparency, showing how every dollar spent at mainstream schools (per pupil), comes to charters in the form of funding or service.
2. **Safe, long-term facilities for every public school**, including charters. Again, all keiki in public education and all public schools deserve this. I feel that if during the first 4 or 5 years a charter school is open, they should get their fair share of what is spent annually on facilities, including but not limited to repair and maintenance. If they are in good standing after this time, they should be supported either by having their fair per pupil split on what is spent on building larger schools, or by having a neutral party help all agree on a reasonable way to provide facilities, from under/un-utilized state property in their area, to funding what it takes to meet their needs, or anything in between.
3. **A charter school office and executive director that is chosen by the people who make charter schools work**, together in one representative body, with the autonomy as intended for charter schools by law, intact. Likewise, we support any Legislation that improves the autonomy of the CSAO and the Review Panel.

We support any part of any bill that supports community, culture, and/or environment-based schools of choice. Because Halau Ku Mana is grounded in Hawaiian community, culture, and `aina, we also support any part of any bill that support the `aina and people of Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your time and consideration, and mahalo for your support of HB1203.

Keola Nakanishi

Executive Director

Halau Ku Mana Public Charter School



KALO

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February 3, 2008

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For the House Committee on
Water, Land, Ocean Resources & Hawaiian Affairs
February 4, 2008 hearing, 8:30 a.m., room 312

Testimony in support of HB 1203 RELATING TO CHARTER SCHOOLS with proposed amendments

Chair Ito and members of the committee:

Thank you for agreeing to hear this carry over bill from last session. It addresses one of the most important challenges facing charter schools in Hawaii, facilities financing. It calls for full funding. This is an idea whose time has come.

Except for 2006 when charters received a one-time per pupil facilities appropriation of \$660, charters don't receive any state funding for facilities (except for the five conversions). Instead, they are forced to pay for their occupancy costs out of a per pupil allocation that is already significantly lower than that provided to Department of Education-operated schools.

Instead of merely looking at lands under the control of the Department of Land and Natural Resources, please consider looking at all state lands as potential venues for charter schools.

Sincerely,

Kū Kahakalau, Ph.D.
Board President

Taffi Wise
Executive Director

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