

TO: HONORABLE CHAIRMAN MARCUS OSHIRO AND DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE

FROM: WILLIAM P. KENOI, ATTORNEY AT LAW

RE: HB 2962 – Safe Haven After School Program

DATE: Hearing on Friday, February 22, 2008

Aloha!

I am writing to respectfully request support for the passage of HB 2962, Safe Haven, After School Programs, by the distinguished members of the House Finance Committee.

This bill is the product of years of discussion by parents, teachers, administrators, community volunteers, and the complex area superintendents of the Island of Hawaii. Since July, we have met with all of the principals of the schools on the Island of Hawaii as well as with our superintendents and our local legislators. There is a consensus that our Island lacks positive, educational and recreational activities for our youth in the afterschool and evening hours. There is also broad support for the potential of utilizing our schools as safe havens for our children during the hours when they are most at risk.

I am advocating for the passage of this bill because it will allow our communities to take ownership and responsibility for our children, for our schools, and for our community's health and safety. Our schools, with adequate parking, facilities, and community access, can be a positive place for our kids beyond the traditional school day. However, we do not want to impose any more upon our teachers and our administrators because they are already being tasked with the education and support of our children during the school day. This bill will allow the education and support of our children by community programs, volunteers, and supporters of our youth.

There is still work to do to finalize the details of the implementation of the program on Hawaii Island. However, with the support of DOE administrators, principals, and multiple community partners, including our state legislator, we can make this dream a reality. A dream whereby all of our youth can be engaged in positive recreational, educational, cultural activities. A dream whereby all of our families can be assured that our youth are at a safe, healthy, and positive environment. A reality where with the support of our state legislators, county policymakers, community volunteers, and our educational administrators, our schools will not be closed at 3 pm but will be Safe Havens throughout the day.

Thank You!