

Date of Hearing: March 24, 2008

Committee: House Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Patricia Hamamoto, Superintendent

Title: H.C. R. 126 (H.R. 108) Urging the department of education to study the feasibility of integrating rehabilitation programs for students with anger problems.

Purpose: The Department of Education is requested to study the feasibility of establishing an anger management program modeled after substance abuse programs to provide students who commit acts of violence or harassment at their school with the tools they need to change their behavior.

Department's Position: The Department of Education (Department) supports the intent of H.C. R. 126 (H.R. 108) to study the feasibility of this measure. However, the Department cautions that simply instituting programs are more reactive than proactive, and may not have the desired effect over time. Thus, the Department recommends that the parameters of the study be expanded to include an exploration of the dimensions of student behavior and proactive, evidence-based interventions and supports that will have a broader, positive impact on student behavior.

Chair Takumi and Vice Chair Berg
Committee on Education

Caithlin Moiha, Nathan Trump,
Royce Bumbard, Kiana Kometani
Kohala High School

Monday, March 24, 2008, 2:00

**HCR 126: SUPPORT OF URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO STUDY THE
FEASIBILITY OF INTEGRATING REHABILITATION PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS WITH ANGER
PROBLEMS.**

Good afternoon Chair Takumi, Vice Chair Berg, and members of the House Education Committee. We are here today to testify in support of House Concurrent Resolution 126 and House Resolution 108.

My name is Kiana Kometani, and here with me are Royce Bumbard, Caithlin Moiha, and Nathan Trump.

We are from a small country school on the Big Island and have been described as one of the most beautiful areas in the state. However, lately, our high school of 283 students, has been plagued with senseless acts of violence in the form of beatings, harassment, and property damage. These destructive behaviors have been dealt with primarily through suspensions. The high rate of repeat offenders shows that the present consequences for fighting and violent behavior are not effective. Something has to be done to assist these troubled students to change their behaviors and to make better choices.

According to an article in the Honolulu- Star Bulletin (10/28/07), school violence across the state has risen in the past three years to levels experienced in the mid-1990s even as fewer students enroll in the public system. Ten years ago, when enrollment peaked with more than 189,000 students, there were 3,086 reported incidents of violence involving 1,720 students. In the 2005-06 year, despite a drop of nearly 8,000 schoolchildren, violence rose to 3,350 cases in which 2,762 students took part, according to the state Department of Education.

That's an 8.5 percent increase in cases and a 60.5 percent hike in the number of students participating in assault, robbery, sexual offense, terroristic threatening, harassment and possession of weapons and firearms.

The most common types of A and B offenses at Kohala High include disorderly conduct, harassment, and terroristic threatening. In 2006-2007 Kohala High had 52 incidences of Class A and B offenses. This was up from 44 incidences in 2005-2006 and 25 incidences in 2004-2005. We had a 108% percent increase in cases in the 3-year span. Already this year we have had 43 class A and B offenses.

productive lives. In turn, students should know how to respond clearly to other young people who are abusive, aggressive, or hostile.

Do we want to be another statistic? Worldwide, nationwide and locally, schools have become the focus of many repeated violent acts. We're no different from other schools in our nation and have the same possibility of being splashed on the front page as another statistic for violent crimes. Does it take a real crisis before anybody responds to it? People don't want to believe there are violent acts and hate crimes in our schools just like people don't want to say there are hate crimes in Hawaii. Inevitably this "land of paradise" is not immune to violence. A wide variety of methods and rehabilitation programs can be implemented to deal positively with conflict and resolve hostile attitudes before they become destructive. We urge the department of education to study the feasibility of integrating rehabilitation programs for students with anger issues before we become another unfortunate statistic.

We are honored to have this opportunity to testify at the State Capitol. This is our first experience and we have learned a lot about the legislative process in the previous weeks, especially today. We are so fortunate to be a part of this delicate and very empowering practice. Thank you very much for allowing us the time to testify today in favor of House Concurrent Resolution 126.

Representative Roy Takumi, Chair
Representative Lyla Berg, Vice Chair
Committee on Education

Paauiilo Elementary and Intermediate School

Good afternoon Chairman Takumi, Vice Chair Berg and the members of the House Education Committee.

My name is Daisha Acorda and I am a 7th grade student at Paauiilo Elementary and Intermediate School. I am joined by my classmates Elle Carvalho, Jasmine Mae Quiamas and 8th grade students Leimana Ebreo and Justin Kwee.

We support the proposed implementation of a mandatory alternative to violence treatment for public school students who are suspended or expelled due to violent behavior. Students who are suspended or expelled are often alienated from their peers and school setting for extended periods of time.

The implementation of mandatory treatment will allow students to possibly return to school sooner and continue their education with increased positive coping skills when dealing with stressors. This will give students in this situation a feeling of a “second chance” and increase acceptance of the individual as a person who is “wanted” in the school environment.

The implementation of mandatory alternatives to violence services, appear to decrease the probability of reoccurring violent behavior by repeat offenders. Studies have shown (Tolan and Nancy, 94 and Stumphauzer, 85) that participating in behavior intervention programs appear to improve moral reasoning and reduce behavior referrals related to violent offences in adolescents. Studies also indicate that such interventions reduce the probability of violent behavior as adults (Tolan and Nancy, 94).

Finally, students who successfully complete the alternative to violence program can also spread their knowledge to their peers. During adolescent period in life, students tend to learn more from their peers. Students who are able to overcome anger issues by positive coping skills can become great role models that may share the skills that they have learned at an alternative to violence program. Furthermore, as parents, they can also share anger management skills with their own children. This in turn, will help schools and communities become a positive and safe place for the next generation.

By providing this mandate we feel that our schools and communities will become more peaceful and safer environments. As young members and leaders of our communities we believe that investing resources for treatment and prevention of violent behavior will definitely make a difference in the future. On behalf of myself and the other students from Paauiilo School, we would like to thank you for this opportunity and your consideration.