

Date of Hearing: February 11, 2008

Committee: Senate Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Patricia Hamamoto, Superintendent

Title: S.B. 2167, Relating to students

Purpose: To require a reduction in class sizes to achieve lower student-to-teacher ratios in public elementary, middle, and high schools. Appropriates funds for staffing needs for the reduction in class sizes.

Department's Position: The Department of Education (Department) supports S.B. 2167 which requires a reduction in class sizes to achieve lower student-to-teacher ratios in Hawaii's public elementary, middle, and high schools. While we recognize the advantage of smaller class size, we have several concerns:

1. The student-teacher ratio is not defined making it impossible to determine whether its recruitment of teachers/staff within and outside the state of Hawaii can meet this additional demand for new teachers, part-time teachers and teacher aides.
2. The implementation timeline of the class size reduction beginning with the 2008-2009 school year is too short. Without knowing the number of additional staff needed, there may not be enough time to recruit and employ the necessary staff including, but not limited to, full-time teachers, part-time teachers, and teacher aides. There may also be insufficient applicants to recruit because of the low overall State unemployment rate, lack of teacher graduates to meet current needs, and lack of applicants for teacher aides that can meet federal No Child Left Behind Act requirements. We suggest an implementation start off date of the 2009-2010 school year.

3. Teacher and other staff positions are established through an individual school's academic and financial plan. For the 2008-2009 school year, these plans have already been submitted and approved based on current staffing levels. Any change to staff levels required for the 2008-2009 school year will not be adjusted to the school's funding levels in sufficient time for principals to make the changes before school begins. The intent to hire more teachers/staff to reduce class size may better be accomplished through additional Weighted Student Formula funds.

The Department will be able to provide a projected fiscal impact of this bill after the proposed class size ratios have been determined by the Legislature. Although reducing class size is a positive measure, any mandate to reduce class size and the funds to implement the change should not replace the current Board of Education's budget priorities.

Testimony before the
Senate Committees on
Education
and
Energy & Environmental Protection

S. B. 2231 - Relating to Energy Efficiency

Monday, February 11, 2008
3:00 p.m., Conference Room 225

by Alan K.C. Hee
Manager, Energy Services Department
Hawaiian Electric Company, Inc.

Chair Sakamoto, Chair Menor, and Members of the Committees:

My name is Alan Hee and I am testifying on behalf of Hawaiian Electric Company, Inc., and its subsidiaries, Maui Electric Company (MECO) and Hawaii Electric Light Company, Inc. (HELCO).

Hawaiian Electric supports the installation of energy efficient lighting products in public schools and supports SB 2231. HECO has been overwhelmed by the response to our CFL rebate program, and last year we provided rebates to over 700,000 CFL purchases. This bill will allow Hawaii's public schools to do what is already happening in our homes across the state.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

WRITTEN ONLY

TESTIMONY BY GEORGINA K. KAWAMURA
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
STATE OF HAWAII
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
ON
SENATE BILL NO. 2167

February 11, 2008

RELATING TO STUDENTS

This bill requires the Department of Education to reduce the ratio of students to teachers in grades 1 through 12 to an unspecified ratio, and to provide additional staff as necessary to support class size reduction.

We do not support this bill for the following reasons:

- The bill provides an unspecified general fund appropriation for FY 08-09, which would increase as class size reduction is phased in over an unspecified number of years.
- The bill circumvents the constitutional power of the Board of Education to formulate statewide educational policy.
- The bill itself is unnecessary. Act 51, the “Reinventing Education Act of 2004,” intended to implement comprehensive education reform, including:
 1. Providing for the development of a weighted student formula, to be implemented beginning with the 2006-2007 school year.
 2. Giving principals control over 70 percent of appropriations effective July 1, 2006.

To improve our public school system, it is recommended that the Legislature allow Act 51 to be fully implemented, and allow school principals to determine spending priorities.

To: Senator Norman Sakamoto, Chair
Senator Jill N. Tokuda, Vice-Chair
Committee on Education

From: Bree Shimizu, MSW Student, UH Manoa

Date: Monday, February 11, 2008 at 3 p.m.
Conference Room 225

Subject: Support of SB 2167, Relating to Students

My name is Bree Shimizu and I am currently a graduate student completing my Master of Social Work Degree at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. I am in support of SB 2167, Relating to Students, which requires a reduction in class sizes to achieve lower student-to-teacher ratios in public elementary, middle, and high schools. Also, SB 2167, Relating to Students, appropriates funds for staffing needs for the reduction in class sizes.

Students deserve to receive the best education. By hiring more teachers, creating more classrooms, and having the funds to provide students with supporting educational environments, students will be in smaller class sizes that will create positive relationships. With a positive teacher-to-student relationship, teachers will be able to identify and work with the struggles that their students have, spend less time with disruptive behavior, and create learning experiences that the students will benefit from in the future (MASB Journal Special Report, Spring 2002). Overall, students will feel comfortable in their learning environment, become more enthusiastic about learning, and achieve higher test scores.

In addition, the investment to reduce class sizes to achieve lower student-to-teacher ratios may result in saving money in the long-run (MASB Journal Special Report, Spring 2002). Since early intervention may reduce behavioral problems and allow teachers to provide the assistance the students need to succeed, remediation and special programs in high school may not be needed. All in all, the longer the students are in small class sizes their positive gain can be beneficial to students in their future educational and career endeavors.

In providing the best educational environment for the students of all grade levels in Hawaii's public schools, we are creating a foundation for future successful, well-educated adults. I urge the committee to pass SB 2167. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.