

Date of Hearing: February 1, 2008

Committee: Senate Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Patricia Hamamoto, Superintendent

Title: S.B. 2235, Making an appropriation to provide for educational assistants.

Purpose: To appropriate funds to provide one educational assistant for every public school class in grades K-3.

Department's Position: The Department of Education (Department) recognizes that educational assistants (EA) play a vital role in providing support to teachers and students in the classroom. However, while the Department supports the concept of having one EA in every classroom in grades K-3, there are concerns regarding this bill.

1. Annual Personnel Cost:

The number of additional EA positions required by this bill is 2,393. This is a 74% increase in the total number of existing EA positions (3,275) statewide with an annual salary cost of \$50,253,000.

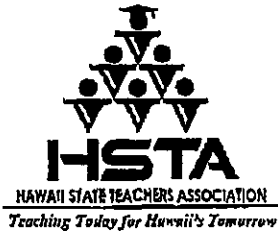
2. Recruitment of EAs:

Currently, the Department has a shortage of EAs due to the additional requirements mandated by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. If the additional positions are temporary positions, this will add to the recruitment dilemma.

3. Training:

Due to the added requirements of NCLB, the Department would require additional funds to provide appropriate training for the additional 2,393 educational assistants. If EAs do not meet the basic requirements, the Department will need to emergency hire these employees. Emergency hire employees do not have the benefits as other contracted employees. This then becomes a recruitment and retention dilemma.

While the concept to have an EA in the K-3 classrooms is a positive measure, the priority must be given to the Board of Education's supplemental operating budget.



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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION**

**RE: SB 2235 – MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO PROVIDE FOR
EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS**

February 1, 2008

**ROGER TAKABAYASHI, PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION**

Chair Sakamoto and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association supports SB 2235. Kindergarten to Grade 3 are crucial years in a child's education. It is during these years that they receive the foundation for reading and writing which are important for succeeding in the later years of education. It is also during these years that behavior problems occur more frequently due to maturity and developmental level of the students.

The Board of Education's policy on class size is 20:1 in Grades K-3 with the maximum not to exceed 25:1 in Grades K-2. There have been incidents of the latter occurring in classrooms where teachers have had their plates full with teaching the curriculum, correcting paperwork, and working with individual students. An educational assistant in every classroom grades K-3 will assist the teacher with student behavior problems. This will assist to provide the best quality education to the students.

We urge the committee to pass this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Norman Sakamoto, Chair
Senator Jill N. Tokuda, Vice Chair

DATE: Friday, February 1, 2008

TIME: 1:30pm

PLACE: State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

Aloha,

My name is Lima F. Tufaga. I am a student in the MSW program at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. I am here to testify on behalf on the Bill SB2335-Making AN APPROPRIATION TO PROVIDE FOR EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS.

I was once an educational assistant at a public school in the Special Education Department for many years. I saw the need and the importance of having another adult/teacher assistant in the classroom with the lead teacher. Early years of learning is very vital for a student's growth and personal development. Having a teacher assistant for every public school class will not only help elivate teacher burn out; and most importantly will boost students self confidence, one on one interaction with the adults involved, and academic success. It is a win-win situation.

I am grateful for the opportunity to testify on behalf of this Bill.

Mahalo,