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January 29, 2008

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For the Senate Committee on Education
January 30, 2008 hearing, 1:15 p.m., room 225

Testimony in strong support of SB 2494 RELATING TO EDUCATION

Facility financing is one of the most important challenges facing charter schools in Hawaii. 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.

Having said that (and in spite of a clear obligation under Article X, section 1 of the State Constitution to provide equitable funding for charter school facilities), let's focus on what is achievable and what we can do now to support the big-ticket repair, maintenance and capital improvement needs of all charter schools without partiality by developing the fiscal, administrative and statutory infrastructure needed to facilitate innovative public-private partnerships that can attract robust, diverse and sustainable resource streams from a wide variety of state and national players.

The Hawaii Charter School Facilities Fund is modeled after the successful Hawaii 3Rs program (and national best practices in charter school facility finance), although expanded to include capital improvement projects as well as repair and maintenance. The language in the bill tracks that of the existing Hawaii 3Rs statute (HRS 302A-1502.4) and tax credit (HRS 235-110.2).

Sincerely,

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Kanu o ka 'Äina Learning 'Ohana
Grows womb-to-tomb models of education that advance Hawaiian culture
for a sustainable Hawai'i