

Testimony of

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Brian T. Taniguchi

Alumnus and Parent

IN SUPPORT OF SB 2580 (Stevenson Middle School)

**Senator Norman Sakamoto
Education Committee Members**

My name is Brian Taniguchi and I testify today in support of Senate Bill 2580 as an alumnus and as a parent who has sent my two children to Stevenson Middle School. I also speak as someone who has been involved with the community and stakeholder meetings that have taken place over the last 6 months concerning what can be done to improve Stevenson.

For me, the current path to improve Stevenson Middle School began when two elementary schools, namely Manoa and Noelani Elementary Schools, were faced with moving their 6th graders to Stevenson. Historically, there had been staunch resistance by parents to the move at both schools, primarily at Noelani. In the spring of 2007, Manoa School actually had the Board of Education rescind a move to have Manoa School 6th graders move to Stevenson by the following year. There were rumblings at Noelani but the school stood steadfast in accommodating the move.

The negative perception of Stevenson was one of the underlying factors in the resistance to move these 6th grade students. Having sent my own children to Stevenson and knowing the high quality of education that they received, I took it upon myself to see what I could do to change this perception.

I met with Principal Gregg Lee in March of 2007 and was surprised to find that he was thinking along the same lines as myself. We convinced a small core group of teachers, staff and people I had worked with on the new Manoa Gym project to organize a series of community/stakeholder brain-storming sessions on how to improve Stevenson. We invited representatives from within the school (teachers, students, parents and staff), from the three feeder schools (Manoa, Noelani and Lincoln), from Roosevelt High School, from neighboring community groups like Papakolea, Kewalo, Kalawahine, and the Makiki and Manoa Neighborhood Boards and other interest groups and individuals.

After 5 well attended meetings and much feedback, we realized that the potential to do great things at Stevenson which would benefit the entire Roosevelt complex was huge. We created a lot of enthusiasm and excitement within the school, especially among the teachers. The participation of the many people who have attended the hearing today is indicative of even more people who provided input into what is now SB 2580.

We hope that you will support SB 2580 and what we have done over the last few months as a model for schools to improve themselves by direct participation. I believe Stevenson is already on a path to creating the kind of learning environment that we all want for our public schools. I hope you will come with us.

Aloha and thank you for your time.