

## LATE TESTIMONY

Date of Hearing: January 30, 2008

Committee: Senate Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Patricia Hamamoto, Superintendent

Title: S.B. 2656, Relating to teachers

Purpose: To appropriate funds for public school teachers to take Praxis preparatory courses, tutorials, or programs to become highly qualified under the No Child Left Behind Act.

Department's Position: The Department of Education (Department) supports S.B. 2656 which provides funds to assist teachers in becoming highly qualified as mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. The Department is at risk of losing federal funds if we are unable to demonstrate to the U.S. DOE that teachers are making progress towards becoming highly qualified in their assigned content areas. The most efficient method for teachers to obtain highly qualified status is through passing the appropriate Praxis examination for their content area. Teachers who take preparatory Praxis courses or tutorials increase their chances of passing the Praxis examination. While we are supportive of funding to assist public school teachers in Praxis preparatory courses and tutorials, funding priority must be given to the Board of Education's supplemental operating budget requests before this measure.

Personal Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Education

January 30, 2008, 1:15 pm, Room 225

by  
Donald B. Young, Acting Dean  
College of Education  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

**SB 2656: Relating to Teachers**

Chair Sakamoto, Vice Chair Tokuda, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Donald Young and I am the acting dean for the College of Education. I support SB 2656, which appropriates funds for public school teachers to take PRAXIS preparatory courses, tutorials, or programs to become highly qualified under the No Child Left Behind Act.

This bill will support one of the multi-faceted approaches to significantly increasing the retention of teachers in Department of Education employment by providing necessary support and additional training for new teachers recommended by the Hawai'i Educational Policy Center (HEPC). This along with other strategies outlined in SB 2653, SB 2667, and SB 2683 will help address teacher workforce development in the state in a more coordinated and effective way.

The Hawai'i Educational Policy Center in its Interim Report to the Legislature responding to the requests of the 2007 SCR 56 S.D.1, concluded

*Preliminary data indicate that by 2010-2011 school year, the number of new hires required in Hawai'i's public schools can be reduced from 1,600 annually to approximately 1,400; by the 2015-2016 school year the number can be reduced to approximately 800. Further reduction does not seem feasible because this is the approximate number of teachers who annually leave DOE employment due to retirements, health issues, and deaths.*

The HEPC Interim Report recommends a number of strategies to enable the State to accomplish this goal, among them is assisting current in-service teachers to pass PRAXIS.

One of the findings reported in the HEPC study was that in some cases the number of positions for which individual schools must recruit might be twice as high as the actual vacancies. This is due to current positions held by not highly qualified teachers—either licensed teachers assigned outside their credentialed area, or emergency hires who have not yet passed the PRAXIS. The “new teacher needs” of a particular school or district include not only the number of classrooms that are without a teacher, but also the number that have a teacher who is not qualified under NCLB to teach that particular grade level or subject.

The Department of Education concludes that one of the barriers to currently employed teachers becoming highly qualified is their inability to pass PRAXIS. These are teachers who have already completed rigorous training to become teachers, are currently employed, but need support and assistance to pass the last hurdle, PRAXIS. Focusing support on these teachers is a promising strategy not only to help them become highly qualified under the law, but is likely to result in much higher retention rates among this population.

Support for teachers to pass PRAXIS was unanimously supported by the Teacher Education Coordinating Committee, which includes representatives of all the teacher preparation institutions in Hawai'i. These Institutions of Higher Education are committed to working with the Department of Education to support their graduates as they enter and mature in the teaching profession. They are working with their pre-service candidates to pass PRAXIS prior to graduation making them legible for licensure from the Hawai'i Teacher Standards board upon graduation. Therefore, the need for appropriation called for in this bill may only be temporary.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.