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LATE

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GOVERNOR

Testimony of Linda Smith
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Before the

Senate Committee on Education
Senate Committee on Intergovernmental and Military Affairs
Friday, February 8, 2008
1:15 PM

SB2877

Senators Sakamoto, Inouye and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for scheduling this measure for hearing. The Office of the Governor supports the intent of SB2877 and believes it is essential to improve both educational opportunities and quality of life for military families in this State. However, we prefer the Administration bill SB3064.

The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children provides standards addressing issues such as enrollment, placement and graduation of children whose parents are active duty service members or recent veterans of the military. Rather than suffering delays and frustrations, this compact would allow military children to quickly integrate into Hawaii's classrooms. Adopting the compact to accommodate military children would greatly improve their access to education and quality of life.

Currently, the Department of Education already has some transition and integration measures in place for military children. Through the Department's initiatives with the Joint Venture Education Forum, military children have received some of the help they need. Yet more can be done. Adopting the compact is a natural step forward for Hawaii and the Department of Education in addressing the quality of education and quality of life issues for our State's military families.

According to David S. C. Chu, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Hawaii's performance on addressing educational issues of military children is adequate, but could be improved. Currently, Hawaii's status on school transition issues is "Amber," as rated by the Department of Defense through the USA4Families program. Hawaii was encouraged by the Under Secretary of Defense to adopt the interstate compact as a means of comprehensively addressing these transition issues. This adoption

would not only upgrade the State's status on transition issues from "Amber" to "Green," but would also change the overall state status on quality of life issues impacting military families from "Amber" to "Green" as well.

However, we prefer the Administration bill SB3046 for technical reasons. We were advised by the Attorney General's office that separate sections need to be set out in statute, in addition to the compact language, in order to effectuate the compact. Article XVIII of SB3064 sets out new sections that define the term "local education agency" as well as list the participating members of the State Council. Therefore, we respectfully suggest that the committee either hear SB3046 or adopt the language of Article XVIII in SB3064.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.