

WRITTEN COMMENTS

Date of Hearing: February 22, 2008

Committee: Senate Committee on
Ways and Means

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Patricia Hamamoto, Superintendent

Title: S.B. No. 2877 S.D. 1 (SSCR 2390), Relating to Interstate
Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

Purpose: Establishes a task force to study the Interstate Compact on
Educational Opportunity for Military Children and other issues
relating to the educational needs of military children.

Department's Position: The Department of Education (Department) supports S.B. No.
2877 S.D. 1 (SSCR 2390). The Department agrees with the
Senate Committees on Education, Intergovernmental and
Military Affairs, and Judiciary and Labor that the Interstate
Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children needs
to be thoroughly assessed and the Department's practices in
addressing educational issues of military children ought to be
fully considered before the Compact is adopted.

Establishing a task force to examine the Compact and the
Department's efforts relative to the provisions of the Compact is
the prudent course of action to take in determining the
appropriate approach for the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



**The Chamber of
Commerce of Hawaii**
Since 1850

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2008
11:00 A.M. IN ROOM 211

Re: SB 2877 SD 1 RELATING TO THE INTERSTATE COMPACT ON EDUCATIONAL
OPPORTUNITY FOR MILITARY CHILDREN

Chair Baker, Vice Chair Tsutsui, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Charlie Ota and I am the Vice President of the Military Affairs Department of The Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii. The Department oversees the Military Affairs Council (MAC) which serves as a liaison seeking solutions to issues of common concern to the military, private sector, and the state.

The MAC submits testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 2877 SD1, Relating to Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, which establishes a task force to study the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.

The compact is a priority military quality of life initiative of the US Department of Defense (DOD). It recognizes that military families are subject to frequent moves from one state to another and that these moves impose challenges in educating military children in US public schools. Military children often enter as many as ten to twelve schools before finally graduating from high school and experience difficulties in transitioning from one school to another. This results in denying military children the schooling opportunities experienced by most American children living in less transitory and stressful environments.

The DOD is soliciting states with military bases to join together in a compact to establish a seamless means by which military children may transition from one school district to another. The intent is to eliminate hardships that have a negative impact on a student's adjustment to a new environment by providing for timely enrollment and proper class placement, eliminating redundant requirements, enabling a student to participate in all school and extra curricular activities, and ensuring on-time graduation.

However, we were informed that the compact as written in the original bill was prepared by a council of state representatives that did not include one from Hawaii, nor was it reviewed in advance by the state Department of Education (DOE) nor the Board of Education. We believe that the lack of input from the state DOE and BOE is a significant oversight since the department is in the best position to determine if all of the proposed procedures can be implemented and what negative impacts, if any, the compact would have on the schools.

Page 2

The Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii Testimony on SB 2877 SD1

February 22, 2008

Moreover, the compact provides for establishing an Interstate Commission, hiring an executive director and staff, determining rates of compensation, establishing a budget, making expenditures, etc. This involves establishing a business office and staff in one or more states to operate and manage the program. The cost of this administrative overhead is to be shared by the participating states. We believe that this shared cost should be reviewed closely as it could amount to a sizable expenditure of state funds if only 10 states sign the compact.

Since the compact is a priority DOD initiative aimed at improving the quality of life for military families, it appears appropriate for DOD to fund the cost of operating and managing the Interstate Commission.

The MAC strongly supports the proposal to establish a Task Force on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children to determine the appropriate action for the state. The MAC is mindful that the transition of military children from states signing the Compact is but a portion of non-resident children transferring to Hawaii's public schools each year. There are hundreds of military children that transfer from overseas bases (e.g., Japan, Korea, Guam, etc) and bases in states that may not be a signed member of the Compact. Moreover, there are children from civilian families moving to Hawaii that encounter similar challenges. We should note that the procedures established under the Compact could be posted on the DOE website and used as a guide to benefit the children of all families moving to Hawaii.