

Date: 01/28/2008

Committee: Senate Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Patricia Hamamoto, Superintendent of Education

Title of : SB 2881 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of : Creates the facilities alignment commission to revitalize school facilities by developing and submitting recommendations for areas for new school construction, schools for expansion, and schools for consolidation or closure. Allows the legislature to disapprove these recommendations only in their entirety. If no legislative disapproval occurs, requires the Board of Education to comply with these recommendations.

Department's Position: The Department of Education does not support this bill. Chapter 8-38 of the Hawaii Administrative Rules ("Consolidation of Schools") provides a procedure for evaluating schools for possible consolidating or closure. A commission to perform these functions would be duplicative of existing mechanisms.

The bill directs the Board of Education to expand existing schools and build new schools as recommended by the commission. However, it is the Legislature, not the Board, that has the authority to appropriate funds for new construction.

The bill requires the Department to prepare a 30-year facilities plan for each school by August 31, 2008. This is not a realistic expectation if there is to be a solid basis for the projections. We are not aware of any state or county population projections that the Department could use to determine enrollment projections for the next 30 years, school by school.

The 2007 Legislature passed a bill requiring developers of residential

housing to pay impact fees for schools in areas designated as impact fee districts. The new districts' boundaries will be determined based on the same type of analysis required of the facilities alignment commission. The analysis is scheduled to be completed this summer for Board review and action. The recommendations of an alignment commission could unnecessarily duplicate the Board's plans and responsibilities.

Finally, we note that the proposed commission would also have to consider issues of instruction and curricula, taking into account national trends in education such as the need for smaller learning communities, either entire schools or schools within schools.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



L A T E

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR

LINDA L. SMITH
SENIOR POLICY ADVISOR

STATE OF HAWAII
GOVERNOR'S POLICY OFFICE
EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
(808) 586-5330

Testimony of Linda L. Smith
Senior Policy Advisor to the Governor

Before the

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
on
SENATE BILL No. 2881

Monday, January 28, 2008
1:15 P.M.

Chair Sakamoto, Vice Chair Tokuda, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 2881.

The Administration commends the Chair of the Education Committee for introducing Senate Bill 2881. This measure puts forth the concept of a facilities alignment commission within the Department of Education. The commission is tasked with establishing criteria for the selection of public schools to be constructed, expanded, consolidated, or closed, in addition to providing recommended actions to the Legislature based on the criteria developed.

While we are supportive of the concept that was put forth by the Economic Momentum Commission in 2005, we are cautious of the composition of the commission. We support a commission that can objectively review and analyze our future facilities needs in public education. As drafted, the commission established in Senate Bill 2881 must have a majority of members who have professional experience in education. We suggest the consideration of persons who have expertise in facilities development, planning, and finance, in addition to members with experience in education.

We are also mindful that this commission would include in its recommendations, areas for new school construction and schools for expansion. The Administration prefers a commission charged with a targeted scope of identifying areas for consolidation or closure, and recommendations for the use or disposal of surplus real property. Proceeds of sales or leases of Department of Education surplus properties should be exclusively reinvested to upgrade and build other public school facilities, including facilities for charter schools. We point out that the process in this bill as it relates to new construction or repair and renovation may duplicate and conflict with the Department of Education's current priority list of projects as it is submitted to

Testimony Senate Bill No. 2881

Monday, January 28, 2008

Page 2 of 2

the Department of Budget and Finance and the Legislature. This raises the question that if this bill were to become law, and the Legislature did not disapprove the recommendations of the commission in its entirety, does the priority listing of the Department of Education/Board of Education or the recommendations of the commission direct facilities planning and funding for public education.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.