

Date of Hearing: March 17, 2008

Committee: Senate Committee on Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Patricia Hamamoto, Superintendent

Title: S.C.R No. 115, Requesting the Department of Education to convene a pilot project to allow a school complex to identify critical department rules and policies that impede effective decision-making, administering, and teaching and to operate free of those rules and policies.

Purpose: To determine if the elimination of identified department rules and policies that are perceived to impede student learning improves school performance and student achievement.

Department's Position: The Department of Education (Department) supports S.C.R. No. 115. However, the Department notes that a substantial opportunity to accelerate this pilot study already exists in light of the knowledge and experiences possessed by our public charter schools. Additionally, the Department requests that this concurrent resolution be modified to clarify the rules and policies under consideration for elimination.

Certainly, many of the Department's long-standing rules and policies deserve critical reexamination. These rules and policies may have been adopted years ago in response to

specific situations which are no longer appropriate. It is in the best interests of the Department as well as the public, to continually strive to refine and update its rules and policies. As numerous Department rules and policies have been created solely in response to legislative mandates, it would be prudent to allow the model complex piloting this study to consider the impact those legislative mandates have had on schools and student learning.

Some of the greatest controls on schools are a result of State and federal legislation. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 is a prime example. This law has had national implications on the rules and policies of public schools. It should be noted that NCLB's accountability requirements apply to all public schools, including public charter schools. However, if the pilot schools identify NCLB as a major impediment to improved student achievement and are permitted to operate free of NCLB, the State would be out of compliance with the federal requirements and subject to possible sanctions.

The groundwork for this pilot project already exists. The creation of public charter schools was a national effort to provide opportunities for schools, new and converted, to

operate outside of the Department of Education. In essence, the charter schools are already addressing the first two points of this concurrent resolution. Within the charter school program, individual schools have identified the rules and policies believed to impede student learning and have been allowed to operate free of the identified impediments. The final point in this measure could be met through a report to be prepared by the Charter School Administrative Office of their findings and recommendations, including proposed legislation. In this manner, the purpose of the proposed concurrent resolution could be met in one year, instead of three.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.



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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: SCR 115 – REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO CONENE A PILOT PROJECT TO ALLOW A SCHOOL COMPLEX TO IDENTIFY CRITICAL DEPARTMENT RULES AND POLICIES THAT IMPEDE EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING, ADMINISTERING, AND TEACHING AND TO OPERATE FREE OF THOSE RULES AND POLICIES.

March 17, 2008

**ROGER TAKABAYASHI, PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION**

Chair Sakamoto and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association supports SCR 115, which convenes a pilot project that would allow a school complex with one high school, a middle school, and at least one elementary school to (1) identify department rules and policies that impede effective decision-making, school administration, and teaching and (2) operate free of those rules and policies.

The action called for in this resolution supports the intent of Act 51. Act 51 requires that “not less than 70% of appropriations for the total budget of the department, excluding debt service and capital improvement programs money shall be expended by the principal”.

While Act 51 provided for budgeting to be at the school level, the schools do not have the discretion to expend the funds to meet the needs of the school community because of rules and policies, and other mandates from the state level with which they must comply.

One such example is the mandate that schools must have quarterly assessments. In the fall of 2006, the schools were told they must pay for a quarterly assessment program that would be administered to all students and that the cost of purchasing the program should be included in the school's financial plan.

In other words, approximately \$1500-3000 per year is required to be expended for an assessment that is not initiated at the school level. At the lower end for the assessment itself, the cost in teachers' time is much more. Therefore, time needs to be set aside to evaluate each assessment of each student. This takes hours to complete. Teachers in most instances do not use the data because they must move on to the next lessons to prepare for the next quarterly assessment.

The Association believes this concurrent resolution will assist in giving schools more authority to determine their needs as Act 51 intended. We also look forward to working with all parties involved in order to improve student learning.

We urge the committee to pass this concurrent resolution.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Re: S.C.R. 115

Senator Sakamoto,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of Senate Resolution S.C.R. 115 proposing creation of a "Complex" pilot project to identify critical department rules and policies that impede effective decision-making, administering, and teaching in our public school system.

The Wai`anae community, like many other communities, desperately needs a significant change in our schools if we are to provide the quality of education that our children so desperately need. At the heart of our challenge is teacher quality. This is not to be critical of our teachers who are committed to our children and who have taken jobs in Wai`anae when others would not. However, almost half of our teachers lack the training or skills necessary to be fully certified as teachers in the State of Hawaii. This is a grave disservice to our children.

Wai`anae High School recently received a Native Hawaiian Grant through the Wai`anae High School Alumni Association. This Grant is an all-out-effort to improve the quality of teachers in our school by fundamentally changing the human resource management system used to attract, recruit, induct, mentor, train *and support* teachers. We have made much progress at the Wai`anae level; but find ourselves up against huge and seemingly insurmountable barriers at gaining changes in the larger education system. Those barriers include state policies and practices as well as state-wide collective bargaining agreements.

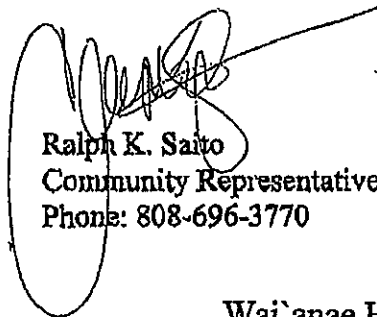
Last year, this body supported our efforts in Wai`anae by enacting legislation to support expansion of the Grant to include K-12. This was a critical change.

At a local level, we can't just change part of the system; we must create change that begins in Kindergarten and carries through high school graduation. It is this collective effort that will have the real impact. Both our children and our parents need consistency in teaching and learning as they go from elementary, to intermediate, to high school and graduation. They should experience consistently high academic and behavior expectations across all grade levels.

This same principle of consistency applies to the larger system. We can't achieve our teacher quality objective by just changing the local piece...we need change throughout the system; especially the human resource management component.

Wai`anae has not advocated for charter schools. However, if this resolution gives Wai`anae – or another Complex - the opportunity to achieve and demonstrate real change, then we will have broken the pattern of resistance to change that plagues Hawaii's schools, and will have created a framework for the improvement of public education for all the children of Hawaii.

Your consideration and support of S.C.R. 115 is sincerely appreciated.



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