

Date of Hearing: April 11, 2008

Committee: Senate Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Patricia Hamamoto, Superintendent of Education

Title: S.C.R. 220, SSCR 3191, Requesting the Department of Education to consider continuing project graduation training through Driver Education Underwriters' Fees as part of Traffic Safety Education

Purpose: Requests the Department of Education to consider funding Project Graduation (PG) training activities through the Department's driver education funds, as allowed by statute; and to submit a report to the Legislature on how the Department is continuing PG training after the cessation of its federal grant.

Department's Position: The Department of Education (Department) supports this resolution as long as funds to support Project Graduation training does not affect the funding priorities for the Department's driver education program in the public high schools.



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April 11, 2008

To: Representative Roy Takumi, Chair, House Committee on Education;  
Representative Lyla B. Berg, Ph.D., Vice Chair; and members of the Committee

From: Arkie Koehl – Chair, Public Policy Committee, MADD-Hawaii

Re: SCR 220 – Requesting the Department of Education to consider continuing  
Project Graduation training through Driver Education underwriters' fees as part of  
traffic safety education.

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I am Arkie Koehl testifying on behalf of the membership of Mothers Against Drunk Driving – Hawaii, in support of SCR 220.

MADD Hawaii has been a strong supporter of Project Graduation since we were introduced to the concept in the 1980s and especially since it became a project of the Department of Education in 1990. MADD is familiar with the training necessary to enlist the aid of parents from schools across the state and to equip them with the skills, information, and contacts necessary to plan and produce a successful Project Graduation alcohol-free event.

Graduation is a huge milestone for high school students and it is only natural that graduation night is a long-awaited time to celebrate with friends in the most festive way possible. In the past, graduation night celebrations invariably included alcohol and occasionally a highway tragedy would result and forever mar the occasion for the family, the school and all its graduates. As SCR 220 pointed out, there are no longer deaths and serious injuries of graduates on graduation night – thanks to the work of the Project Graduation coordinator and the many parents and community members who make events in 50 high schools truly life-saving and memorable experiences.

Training is an absolute essential part of Project Graduation and MADD Hawaii favors using some of the Drivers Education funds to support the training component since the Federal grant is ending. Project Graduation has become a wonderful way for the community and parents to come together to ensure that graduates reach their future. We urge the committee to pass this resolution.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Testifier's Name, Position/Title and Organization:

Gary Taketa, Co Chair for Roosevelt Project Graduation 2008 and Chair for 2009

Committee: House Committee on Education

Date of Hearing: Friday, April 11, 2008, 2:00 p.m.

Title: (In Support of) SCR No. 220 (SSCR3191), Requesting the Department of Education to Consider Continuing Project Graduation Training Through Driver Education Underwriters' Fees as Part of the Traffic Safety Education

My name is Gary Taketa and I have served as a committee member of Roosevelt PG and am currently Co Chair for Roosevelt Project Graduation 2008. I am currently the chairperson for the Ma'ema'e Elementary School Community Council. I have also served as member of the Ma'ema'e SCBM, a board member and president of the Ma'ema'e PTSA. I have also served as a Den Leader with Cub Scout Pack 201 and Leader and Committee Chair for Boy Scout Troop 201. I also served as a board member and president of the Kawanankoa PTSA. I have also been a member of the Kawanankoa and currently Roosevelt Band Booster Club.

It has been my experience that parent participation in school activities is generally very good at the elementary level and begins to taper off at middle and intermediate school and very difficult or almost non-existent at the high school level. Project Graduation is one of the few high school activities that the parents can get involved.

Roosevelt High School has the distinction of being the first public high school in the State of Hawaii to have a Project Graduation in June 1990. It was with the foresight of the Advisor of the Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD) Chapter, school administration, PTSA and parent volunteers that this movement started to give the "gift of life" to their children. Project Grad is an alcohol free and drug free celebration with classmates after commencement. But it is more than that, embedded in this activity are positive benefits like involvement of parents, school and community partnerships with businesses and corporations; it is a once in a lifetime, memorable celebration, first class reunion, last celebration with all the classmates; worry free evening for the parents, knowing that the children are in a safe environment and the event normally requires a minimal fee to attend. It is my understanding that there are close to 50 high schools in Hawaii that have a Project Grad.

It is a known fact that traffic crashes are still the leading cause of death for youth between 15 and 24 years of age. Nationally, on the average, every two to three weeks, a whole senior class is wiped out due to alcohol-related crashes caused by underage drinking and driving!! Think about this! I was just approached by a parent at Roosevelt and he reflected on his graduation night and how he lost a classmate and very close friend in an alcohol related auto accident, not even 8 hours after graduating!!!

I believe this is what PG is about, if we are able to save just one life, isn't worth all the time and effort? Think of all the tomorrows the graduating class will have. Think of all the anguish that the friends, families, relatives will be spared. But also, think about the losses, not only in property and in human value that will not occur.

Hawaii has the unique distinction of being the only state in the nation with the policy that all students who participate in PG celebrations CANNOT drive after the event and must be picked up by a designated driver who is 21 years of age or older. This policy evolved because PG events were viewed as an alcohol countermeasure program for the community.

Most of the information I am conveying to you was presented at the orientation and training for PG parents, like myself, over the past couple of years. These sessions minimize "reinventing the wheel" if I may and help with our learning curve as we move on with the planning for our PG. I strongly support the passage of this Resolution encouraging the DOE to continue Project Graduation training for parents through driver education funds. Thank you for your time.

*Dany Jakob*

Testifier's Name, Position/Title and Organization: Terry Lee Goya, Secretary of Mililani High School SPADA, Inc.

Committee: House Committee on Education

Date of Hearing: **Friday, April 11, 2008, 2:00 p.m.**

Title: (In support of) SCR No. 220 (SSCR3191), Requesting the Department of Education to Consider Continuing Project Graduation Training Through Driver Education Underwriters' Fees as Part of Traffic Safety Education

My name is Terry Lee Goya and I am the current secretary of Mililani High School SPADA (Students and Parents Against Drugs and Alcohol), Inc. We are a non-profit organization and not sponsored by Mililani High School.

Like many high schools in the State of Hawaii, the Mililani High School Class of 2008 will be recognizing their graduation milestone with a Project Graduation celebration following their commencement exercises. Project Graduation events are planned and coordinated by parent volunteers who dedicate hundreds of hours and hard work in order to host a safe, secure and drug- and alcohol-free environment for the graduates who choose to participate in these all-night events filled with food, entertainment and fun activities.

Unfortunately, each year there is a new group of parents organizing Project Graduation events for the graduating class. As stated in the S.C.R. No. 220, Project Graduation is recognized as a community prevention program to reduce injuries and fatalities during graduation season and has been a successful traffic safety education activity conducted statewide. In order to keep Project Graduation a success, it is essential that training be offered for parents each year. The current federal grant supporting Project Graduation training will end in September, 2008. However, funds allocated to the Department of Education from the Special Driver Education Fund underwriters' fee may be used for the Department of Education's traffic safety education program. As such, I firmly support of the passage of S.C.R. No. 20 encouraging the Department of Education consider continuing Project Graduation training activities through driver education underwriters' fees as part of traffic safety education.

Testifier's Name: **Wendy A. Higa**

Position/Title and Organization: **Co-Chair Baldwin High School Project Graduation Committee**

Committee: **House Committee on Education**

Date of Hearing: **Friday, April 11, 2008, 2:00 p.m.**

Title: **(In support of) SCR No. 220 (SSCR3191), Requesting the Department of Education to Consider Continuing Project Graduation Training Through Driver Education Underwriters' Fees as Part of Traffic Safety Education**

My name is Wendy Higa. I am an Administrative Assistant at Arisumi Brothers, Inc. I am a Co-Chairperson along with Jo-Ann Kunishige for Baldwin High School Project Graduation. I've served as President & Secretary of Maui Waena Intermediate School Band Booster Club, President & Membership Chair for Lihikai School PTA. I am also serving on the Board of Directors for the Maui Sons & Daughters of the Nisei Veterans and Maui Council 4-H.

This is my third year helping with BHS Project Graduation. In previous years our school had the unfortunate distinction for having student driving/auto/drinking/drugs deaths. It isn't something to be proud of regrettably it is true.

Graduation is an exciting time of celebration. With Project Graduation, the celebration is done safely with all your friends. Four years ago after graduation, we went to the mall for dinner. A bunch of cars with kids hanging out of the cars dressed in graduation clothes drove by screaming. It was disaster waiting to happen.

Personally I would like to thank each and every Senator & Representative in our Legislature for supporting Project Graduation through the Drivers Education program. This is the best way to get the message across. From those who teach how to drive to those who will be driving.

Even if this is my third year with Project Graduation, without the training I received in the Fall training session, I would not be able to lead my group. The insight that they provide helps us to know what has worked before and what hasn't, you don't have to recreate the wheel.

**I strongly support the passage of this Resolution** encouraging the DOE to continue Project Graduation training for parents through driver education funds.

**berg1-Liz**

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**From:** Carol Maier [carolmm@hawaii.rr.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 10, 2008 1:37 PM  
**To:** EDNtestimony  
**Cc:** Rep. Lyla B. Berg  
**Subject:** SCR No.220 (SSCR3191)

My name is Carol Maier and I am on the board of directors of Kealakehe Project Grad 2008. I am in support for continuing Project Graduation Training through Driver Education Underwriters' Fees as Part of Traffic Safety Education. This is a great event that takes a lot of preparation making sure our graduating students stay safe during a very exciting day of their lives. We try to plan and prepare a great all night, drug and alcohol free, chaperoned event, keeping the kids off the roads. Because it is usually new parents each year, this gives them a chance to see how other events have taken place and ask any questions that are of concern. Please do Continuing Project Graduation Training to help all the New Parents get the best knowledge on how to make this a Safe, Memorable Evening for our Graduating Seniors.

4/10/2008

**berg1-Liz**

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**From:** Lisa\_Vegas/CASTLE/HIDOE@notes.k12.hi.us  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 10, 2008 1:50 PM  
**To:** EDNtestimony  
**Cc:** Rep. Lyla B. Berg  
**Subject:** SCR 220

Testifier's Name, Position/Title and Organization: Lisa Vegas, Secretary of the Kailua High School Project Graduation 2008 Committee

Committee: House Committee on Education

Date of Hearing: **Friday, April 11, 2008, 2:00 p.m.**

Title: (In support of) SCR No. 220 (SSCR3191), Requesting the Department of Education to Consider Continuing Project Graduation Training Through Driver Education Underwriters' Fees as Part of Traffic Safety Education

My name is Lisa Vegas, I am a teacher and class advisor at Castle High School. I have volunteered in the past at Castle's and Kailua's Project Graduation Events and am now deeply involved in Kailua's Project Grad. My daughter is a senior at Kailua High, my older daughter graduated in 2006, and I am so glad that they have this event to celebrate their graduation. As a parent, it gives me piece of mind to know that my child will be safe and not out driving around with drunk drivers on the road. If Project Grad was not available for the graduates, they would be out celebrating with friends, going from one party to the next. I remember when I graduated, that's exactly what we did, although the drinking age was 18 at the time. With Project Grad in place, police do not have to worry about graduates being on the road. The training events for the parents in the Project Graduation committee are crucial because it helps them to understand the reason why it was formed, and it also gives them the tools and knowledge to carryout the event successfully.

As noted in the Resolution, Project Graduation is one of the three high school activities in which parents get involved. Though parent participation in school activities is generally good at the elementary level, it tapers off at middle school, and is almost non-existent at the high school level, despite efforts of school staff, with the exception of band, athletics, and Project Graduation. As a state, we are trying to get the schools involved with the communities and Project Grad is the perfect opportunity to get the community involved. They are so supportive of the program because they are directly affected. Although it is not a school event, people in the community see it as such. It's a great way to get parents and the community involved with the schools and its students.

High school graduation is a really important event for both students and parents in Hawaii. Why do parents support Project Graduation? Because it's a great gift that you can give to your child: A safe way to have a great time, possibly for the last time, with your high school friends and classmates. A safe way to spend your graduation night **without** drinking and driving and getting into accidents because you feel



so “high.” A safe way to surprise your child with “fun” activities that they don’t know about until Project Graduation starts.

**Because there is a new group of parents every year** that plans Project Graduation for their children at the more than 50 public and private high schools that currently conduct Project Graduation, **it is critical that Project Graduation training be offered for parents every year.** The Department of Education has been doing this since 1990 through a Department of Transportation federal grant for this traffic safety education activity. Since the grant is ending in September 2008, it is important for the DOE to continue this annual training for parents. State law allows driver education funds to be used for traffic safety education activities, including training parents for Project Graduation. **I strongly support the passage of this Resolution** encouraging the DOE to continue Project Graduation training for parents through driver education funds.

Date of Hearing: Friday, April 11, 2008, 2:00 p.m.  
Committee: House Committee on Education  
Title: In support of SCR 220 (SSCR 3191),  
Requesting the Dept. of Ed. to consider continuing  
Project Graduation Training through Drivers Ed Underwriters Fees as part of  
the Traffic Safety Education program

Aloha, my name is Tanya Yamada and I am currently the president of Kaimuki High School's PTA. I have also served on the committee for Project Graduation in 2006, and will serve again next year when my daughter will be graduating. I am the parent facilitator at Jarrett Middle School, and a part time tutor in the classroom, but first and foremost, I am the parent of two teenagers.

I am sure you have received testimony on the background of Project Graduation, so I will not go into details of the program. What I would like to stress is the importance of the training that the parents receive from the conferences and training sessions that has been provided through the Dept. of Transportation grant, which will be ending this fall.

In my work with parents, I have found that parental involvement tapers off dramatically during the teenage years, when it is especially critical for our youth. Project Graduation is an important component of keeping parents involved. Because we have a new set of parents every year, it is imperative for the training to be continued. The committees usually consist of a small core group of parents who work hard to raise funds and plan for a very special night for their children and classmates. Without the support of the training, I foresee a lot of the high schools not providing this much needed event on graduation night, which could have very tragic results.

Thank you

Tanya Yamada

Testifier's Name, Position/Title and Organization: Joanne Swearingen, Chairperson of the Kaimuki High School Community Council

Committee: House Committee on Education

Date of Hearing: **Friday, April 11, 2008, 2:00 p.m.**

Title: (In support of) SCR No. 220 (SSCR3191), Requesting the Department of Education to Consider Continuing Project Graduation Training Through Driver Education Underwriters' Fees as Part of Traffic Safety Education

My name is Joanne Swearingen and I recently retired from the Department of Education as administrator for the Accreditation and School Improvement Section. Formerly, I've also served as DOE state program manager for the driver education program. As a supporter of public education and parent involvement in the public schools, I am also currently serving as chairperson of the Kaimuki High School Community Council, Scholarship Chairperson for the Kaimuki High PTA, and Jarrett Middle School Foundation Board member. In the past I've served as Hokulani PTA president, Jarrett Band Parents Association president, Kaimuki High PTA president, and on the Hawaii State PTSA Board as Honolulu region director. I also served on the Project Graduation committees at Kalani High School and Kaimuki High School.

As noted in the Resolution, Project Graduation is one of the three high school activities in which parents get involved. Though parent participation in school activities is generally good at the elementary level, it tapers off at middle school, and is almost non-existent at the high school level, despite efforts of school staff, with the exception of band, athletics, and Project Graduation.

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