



KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Education and Housing
Hearing Date: Friday, March 20, 2009
1:30 p.m. – Conference Room 225

**Kalei Kailihiwa, Director, Ho'olako Like
Kamehameha Schools**

Re: HB 1686 HD2 Relating to Charter Schools

Good afternoon Chair Sakamoto and members of the Senate Committee on Education and Housing. My name is Kalei Kailihiwa, Director, Ho'olako Like, of Kamehameha Schools. Thank you for this opportunity to testify regarding HB 1686 HD2 relating to charter schools.

We are concerned that the language in this bill, in its present form, may have the potential unintended consequence of lowering the per pupil allocation of funding for public charter schools by eliminating the per pupil formula approach.

We strongly support equitable and fair funding for public charter schools and want to ensure that any mechanism intended to address funding issues will not result in reduced funding amounts. We look forward to positively engaging in public dialog to support charters.

Kamehameha Schools has been a collaborator in the charter school movement for more than six years now. As part of our Education Strategic plan, KS hopes to significantly impact more Hawaiian children ages 0-8 and grades 4-16+, and their families/ caregivers over the next five years, in collaboration with others whenever possible.

Currently, Kamehameha Schools works with 12 nonprofit tax-exempt organizations, including `Aha Pūnana Leo, OHA, KALO and Ho`okāko`o Corporation, to assist a total of 14 start-up and 3 conversion charters with special projects, professional development, and technical assistance. Kamehameha Schools believes that these efforts provide more positive educational choices and ultimately enhances academic achievement and greater school engagement for Hawaiian students. Through these collaborations, Kamehameha Schools currently assists more than 3,200 students in eleven communities on 4 major islands, within the public education system.

Recent research conducted over the past three years shows that Hawaiian-focused charter schools are implementing positive educational strategies and make a difference to Hawai'i's public school landscape in the following ways:

- They demonstrate success in helping "at-promise" students jump-start academic momentum using rigorous place-based and project-based strategies;
- The schools provide relevant and rigorous education in ways that engage both Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian students;
- They cultivate values of environmental stewardship and civic responsibility among future leaders;
- They build a strong sense of 'ohana through caring and supportive student/teacher relationships;
- They enhance the well-being, family involvement, and economic sustainability of communities.

In summary, supporting and replicating the successful strategies found in Hawaiian-focused charter schools is a good way to invest in education that has potential benefits for the entire public school system.

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LATE TESTIMONY

March 20, 2009
1:30 p.m.
Conference Room 225

TESTIMONY TO
THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND HOUSING

RE: HB 1686 HD2 – Relating to Charter Schools

Dear Chair Sakamoto, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Robert Witt, and I am executive director of the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools (HAIS), which represents 97 private and independent schools across our state and is a member of the Charter School Review Panel.

While HAIS supports the intent of House Bill 1686, House Draft 2 – Relating to Education, which proposes to establish a charter school funding mechanism to ensure that charter schools receive fair and equitable funding, we oppose the measure as it is currently written.

We appreciate the Legislature's efforts to address this important issue by exploring alternative means by which to provide charter schools with fair funding, such as setting aside the formula for per-pupil allocations in favor of the budgetary request process used by other state agencies.

That said, however, we believe that the per-pupil method of funding charter schools eliminated in this most recent bill draft (House Draft 2) is actually the best way to ensure that both future student population increases are properly addressed and charter school funding remains equitable in spite of any changes in school enrollment. To that end, we would like to encourage the Committee to consider adding in language to this measure that would re-establish a per-pupil formula as the means for determining state funding for charter schools.

The Association is a strong supporter of charter schools and the diversity that they bring to our local education community. We look forward to continuing to participate in constructive dialogue with the Legislature regarding their support.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Attention: Senator Norman Sakamoto, Chair, and Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Education and Housing

Testimony of: Linda Elento, Charter School parent, Hawaii Down Syndrome Congress

Hearing: Friday, March 20, 2009, 1:30 pm

HB1686 H.D.2

Charter Schools: Funding

These comments are provided in support of fair and equitable funding for charter schools as addressed in the mandates of the **Charter School Expansion Act** and **Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA)** in order for charter schools to have the capacity to meet Hawaii's definition of charter school (HRS302B-01)—

"Charter school" refers to those public schools holding charters to operate as charter schools under this chapter, including start-up and conversion charter schools, and that have the flexibility and independent authority to implement alternative frameworks with regard to curriculum, facilities management, instructional approach, virtual education, length of the school day, week, or year, and personnel management.

In re-thinking charter school funding, the legislature will further benefit students who need special education by re-evaluating HRS 302B-15 and making clear the roles of the following parties regarding special education policies, procedures, authority and funding, including the line of authority for special education law compliance as well as individual decisions made for students which must be within the Charter Schools—

charter school and the student's IEP team
charter school independent school board
Charter School Administrative Office and its Executive Director
Charter School Review Panel
Board of Education
Department of Education and its Superintendent

HRS 302B-6, Consider an addition under (d) to include a plan for providing special education, and for recruiting students with disabilities in a non-discriminatory manner.

For budgeting, in addition to regular education per pupil costs, consider including an average special education per pupil cost, with the participation in a state-wide high cost special needs fund when necessary.

Consider the Charter School Review Panel as the direct authority and responsibility for the special education of their charter school students. In accordance with the **IDEA**, Charter Schools should be allowed, by Hawaii statute, to request funding and services as well as individually contract with the Department when special education services are required of its students.

The Board of Education recently combined special education and regular education matters into one committee. I ask the Legislature to consider that special education for children in charter schools cannot be separated from regular education in funding, in programs, or in practice in charter schools. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony.