

Date of Hearing: February 2, 2009

Committee: Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Patricia Hamamoto, Superintendent

Title: H.B. No. 985, Relating to Education

Purpose: The purpose of this Act is to return the Department of Education to a system divided by districts in lieu of the current complex area structure. It requires the Board of Education to appoint the district superintendents, and it establishes the duties of the district superintendents.

Department's Position: This bill, if enacted, would adversely affect student academic achievement, safety and well-being, and increased civic responsibility by diverting limited funds and resources from classrooms and schools, complicating the alignment of school improvement and system improvement activities, and jeopardize improvements in system accountability and transparency.

This bill effectively creates an undetermined number of school districts the net result of which may significantly alter the composition of the Hawaii Board of Education and the Department status with the United States Department of Education (USDOE). Article X, Section 2 of the Hawaii Constitution requires "at least one member residing in each

departmental school district.” Districts as defined in this bill will meet the federal definition of “local education agency.” Federal program requirements are very precise regarding the allocation and use of federal program funds, as well as performance reporting, with regards to local education agencies.

Section 2 as worded meets the operational definition of LEA in Part 77 of EDGAR. Complex Area Superintendents, through the Superintendent of Education, already have exercise authority over the internal organization, operation, and management of the complex area and schools within the complex area. The Complex Area Superintendents also oversee the administration of education and public instruction in their assigned complex area.

The elimination of complex areas would require reorganization of the system, increase the ratio of schools to regional superintendent supervision, and limit the amount of direct services provided to schools. Rather than increasing the availability of the regional superintendents to the schools, this act would reduce their ability to provide instructional program guidance by greatly increasing their regional administrative duties.

Expanding the number of individuals authorized to legally bind the State of Hawaii is a risk issue. The described transfer of organizational, operational, and managerial authority from the state superintendent to the regional superintendents would come at a cost to the system. Duties currently handled at the state level would be transferred to and duplicated in districts. Any reorganization of state-level personnel assigned to support those duties would require union consultation which could greatly delay any transfers of support personnel to the regional offices. The proposed changes would decrease consolidation and the efficient use of resources as well as the standardization of educational practices within the Department.

In addition, changing the regional organizational units to districts may affect the Department's federal reporting. For example, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires the reporting of proficiency data at the district level as well as at the school level. Our current organizational structure allows the Department to report as a single district. Organizing the schools into administrative districts may negate that allowance placing additional reporting burdens on the districts. If additional district level federal reports are

required, it would increase the data processing and reporting costs substantially. Thus, the regional superintendents could be faced with the necessity of allocating limited district funds toward federal reporting compliance.

In conclusion, the proposed changes place unnecessary financial and personnel resource burdens on the Department, reduce the resources available for direct support to the schools, and are not in the best interests of the students.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

February 1, 2009

Representative Roy Takumi
Chairman of the House Committee on Education
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Oahu

Re: House Bill 985

Chairman Takumi and members of the Committee on Education. My name is Takashi Domingo; I am the present chairman of the Honokaa Elementary School Community Council on the island of Hawaii.

I support House Bill 985, amending the existing law, and ask that a favorable recommendation be made towards its passage. I feel that it will eliminate the existing bureaucracy and provide for more accountability of the now existing complex area Superintendent structure.

A mere, simple difference of the interpretation of the Statewide Community Council's Handbook by the DOE and our Community Council at the school has led to a severe breakdown of communications between the Department Of Education, parents, community and teachers. I feel the proposed amendments will have a positive effect and will improve such situations as they now exist. With the appointment of qualified District School Superintendents by the Board Of Education, there will be a clearer and closer oversight in all our school Districts.

Due to a conflicting engagement I will not be able to attend tomorrow's hearing. I thank you very much for the opportunity to address this distinguished body.

Sincerely,

Takashi Domingo
Email: Takaelectric@aol.com
Phone number: 775-9065

**RAMONA HUSSEY, P.O. Box 394, Laupahoehoe, Hawai'i 96764
808-962-6920 ramona@java.net**

February 2, 2009

Via email: EDNtestimony@Capitol.hawaii.gov

Representative Roy Takumi
Chair, House Education Committee
Hawai'i State Legislature
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: H.B. 985 Relating to Education
Hearing on February 2, 2009

Dear Rep. Takumi:

My name is Ramona Hussey, and I am a resident of Laupahoehoe on the Big Island of Hawai'i. My children are now grown, but I strongly support improving our education system in Hawai'i.

I ask for your support for the above bill which would return Hawaii's schools to a more localized posture. Currently many schools report to a consolidated Complex Area Superintendent. That is the case in my community -- Laupahoehoe School is part of the larger complex area which includes the heavily populated Hilo area. We are a unique community -- very rural, not highly populated, and located 25 miles from Hilo! Our needs and concerns are very different from the Hilo school community.

For instance, the Hilo schools serve people who live close by and do not need extensive bus service for afterschool activities. In our community, very few students can ever walk to school, as they live much too far away. Therefore afterschool programs, including tutoring, sports, and school events must always consider the problem of transportation. Additionally, our school is under-enrolled, contrary to what we hear of Hilo schools. These facts mean that very different policies and use of funds may be necessary to provide a good education for our students.

Representative Mark Takamine's bill would provide for a District Superintendent who would make decisions for schools which are closer geographically, and therefore, would bring decision-making closer to the local level. I believe the change anticipated by H.B. 985 would benefit our particular situation, as well as that of many other rural schools in the State. I urge your support of House Bill 985.

Sincerely,

Ramona Hussey

**46-3585 Kahana Drive
Honokaa, Hawaii 96727
(808) 640-3181**

TO: Representative Roy Takumi, Chair; Representative Lyla Berg, Vice-Chair,
and Members, House Committee on Education

FROM: Fred C. Holschuh, M.D.

SUBJECT: HB 985, Relating to Education

DATE: February 2, 2009

Chair Takumi, Vice-Chair Berg and Members:

I am requesting your support for HB 985, which would return the Department of Education to a system divided by districts rather than the current complex area structure. I am an emergency physician so my area of expertise is not public education. However, I ran for Hawaii County mayor in 2000 and subsequently spent four years on the Hawaii County Council. I am well aware that a majority of residents I know feel that any move towards local decision making regarding our school system is a positive step. Additionally, this bill, HB 985, was introduced by Rep. Mark Nakashima who has not only worked with HSTA, but most importantly has been a teacher. I also am impressed by the large number of House members who co-signed this bill.

I respectfully request your favorable consideration of this bill. Thank you.

Aloha,



Fred C. Holschuh, M.D.

berg1-Liz

From: elders [elders@cruzio.com]
Sent: Saturday, January 31, 2009 8:27 AM
To: EDNtestimony
Cc: sentakamine@hawaii.capitol.gov; Rep. Mark Nakashima
Subject: TESTIMONY URGING APPROVAL OF HB 985

Mail: House Committee On Education, Hawaii State Capitol, Room 324, 415 South Beretania Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Fax: 1-800-535-3859
Email: EDNtestimony@Capitol.hawaii.gov

By Email/CC by Fax

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

FROM: BARNEY ELDERS, Laupahoehoe, HI
DATE: January 31, 2009

TO: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, REP. ROY TAKUMI, CHAIR
Re: HB 985
Hearing Date: Monday, February 2, 2009
Time: 2:00pm
Conference Room 309

TESTIMONY URGING APPROVAL OF HB 985: Returns the Department of Education to a system divided by districts in lieu of the current complex area structure. Requires the Board of Education to appoint the district superintendents. Establishes the duties of the district superintendent.

Aloha, Chairman Takumi and members of the House Committee on Education.
My name is Barney Elders, resident of Laupahoehoe, Hawai'i.

I am writing to urge approval of Rep. Mark Nakashima's bill regarding restructuring of DOE (Bill 985). This measure seeks to return the Department of Education to a system divided by districts, thereby implementing slightly more local control for Hawai'i schools. This measure is necessary because Hawai'i schools are highly diverse, ranging from small rural schools to large urban schools. A policy that works for a large school may be a mistake for a small school. Also, due to changes in the economy it is necessary to experiment with curriculums that are new and innovative (for instance, more vocational and technical education) to meet the needs of the state. Decentralization promotes innovation. Having everything centrally controlled by a centralized Department of Education defeats these necessary goals. Rep. Nakashima's bill is a very modest step in the direction of making schools more innovative and responsive to state and community needs.

The Hawai'i State Department of Education is the most centralized and only statewide public education system in the United States. Established by Kamehameha III on October 15, 1840, it is the oldest school system west of the Mississippi River and only system established by a sovereign monarch. The Hawai'i State Department of Education oversees all public schools and charter schools and all teachers in the State of Hawai'i.

There are seven individual school districts that are directly controlled from Honolulu by the fourteen members of the Board of Education. The Board of Education is empowered by the State Constitution (Article X, Section 3 [1] to formulate statewide education policy. The Board

also has the power to appoint the Superintendent of Education as the chief executive officer of the system.

Regardless of the Constitutional mandate for a single Board of Education, the Board has authority to administer the education system according to law and policy best suited for the changing needs of the state.

There has been ongoing debate about the centralization issue. The main rationale usually given for the current centralized model is equity in distribution of resources. However, this goal could still be attained if the control over other aspects of the education system were more decentralized. Decentralization is a means of moving decision-making closer to the classroom, and thus achieving better student performance.

Historically, American schools and the public have favored decentralization as a more democratic, efficient, and effective method for public education. Interestingly, the only recent attempt to create an education system similar to the Hawai'i model was proposed by ex-Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich and that attempt was rejected by the public in that state.

Nationwide, it has only been during the past 30 years that local school districts have gradually yielded policy-making discretion to state legislatures and bureaucracies. The argument has been that centralization would improve equity and student and teacher performance.

This has resulted in local school districts losing control over funding, standards, and curricular content. However, the historical record shows that school quality has actually declined as a result of this "experiment" in centralization.

State primacy in the operation of schools is a drastic reversal of American political ideology, which has traditionally spurned distant government in favor of decision-making power closer to home. To restore balance, states can avoid prescribing the details of school practice, and school boards can assert their leadership role.

Nationwide, the reasons for the centralization movement can be traced back to some of the following developments since about 1960:

- *the fact that civil rights, women's roles, student rights, bilingual education, student rights and due process had been overlooked by local politics in some school districts
- *the proliferation of federal and state categorical aid programs
- *movements to limit property taxes that normally support local school districts (for instance, Prop 13 in California)
- *the desire for accountability, competency, academic standards, teacher competence, and curriculum quality

Hawai'i schools can be decentralized and local control improved without sacrificing civil rights and without problems with funding mechanisms.

And while educational standards need to be uniform to a reasonable extent, excessive emphasis on a "one size fits all" approach to education actually prevents innovation, competition and educational excellence.

Although some observers believe that centralized and standardized policies can increase school effectiveness, much evidence suggests that the most significant improvements occur when individual schools are given more responsibility.

One of the arguments in favor of decentralization is the importance of a school-level or "shared moral order" developed over the years by teams of educators, parents, and students. In Hawai'i the truth of this approach can be seen in the charter school movement where charter schools that have more local control have actually out-performed other schools.

Also state mandates that lack funding or tamper with everyday governance and administration are likely to fall of their own weight. Due to work load, state functionaries have limited understanding of local needs and are not as motivated as the local community to assume the multiple judicial, legislative, and public relations of local school boards.

State education departments tend to be sluggish bureaucracies with contradictory goals and regulations not readily adaptable to diverse local contexts. For example, state policies designed to ensure curricular alignment with statewide tests can conflict with policies designed to attract and retain outstanding teachers, who need opportunities to exercise their independence and creativity. Also, states' emphasis on standardized testing tends to narrow the curriculum.

Ideally, there should be a balance of state and local controls, a way to foster higher standards without discouraging local initiative or squelching teacher creativity. One way is "for the state or district to emphasize desired outcomes in broad terms and not prescribe content or procedures in detail". Bound only to a common core of knowledge and skills, individual schools should be encouraged to develop their own "distinctive characters" and "pursue shared educational goals."

The centralized system set up by Kamehameha III on October 15, 1840 may have worked well for the 19th and 20th centuries and when Hawai'i had a smaller population and when the need for innovation and change was not as pressing as it is in the high-tech 21st century. But systems must change over time to meet changing needs and to improve based on experience.

Rep. Mark Nakashima's Bill 985 is a small step in the direction of decentralization that will revitalize Hawai'i public schools and serve the needs of the students, teachers, and public over time. Please support Bill 985.

Very Truly Yours,
Barney Elders
Laupahoehoe, HI

berg1-Liz

From: Sharman Haunga [sharmanh@provo.edu]
Sent: Sunday, February 01, 2009 1:07 PM
To: EDNtestimony
Cc: walterselectric2@hawaii.rr.com
Subject: Lucille Chung Testimony

LUCILLE V. CHUNG
P. O. BOX 6040
HILO, HI 96720

REPRESENTING MYSELF AS AN ALUMNAS OF LAUPAHOEHOE SCHOOL AND AS A LEADER IN THE LAUPAHOEHOE COMMUNITY - VICE PRESIDENT OF THE NORTH HILO COMMUNITY COUNCIL, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE HAWAIIAN CIVIC CLUB OF LAUPAHOEHOE - WHO CONCERN THEMSELVES WITH ISSUES CONCERNING LAUPAHOEHOE SCHOOL.

NOTICE OF HEARING

DATE: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2009

TIME: 2:00 PM

PLACE: CONFERENCE ROOM 309
STATE CAPITOL
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI

HB 985 RELATING TO EDUCATION

My name is Lucille Viveiros Chung, a 1958 graduate of Laupahoehoe School. Several of my seven siblings are also graduates of Laupahoehoe School. All of my four children also graduated from Laupahoehoe School. I have always been an advocate for supporting and improving education to meet the needs of our children in today's world.

In view of this perspective, I strongly urge your support of House Bill 985 relating to the restructuring of the Department of Education in order to bring the governance of the schools in the State of Hawaii closer to the communities they serve.

At the present time, Laupahoehoe School is part of the Hilo/Waiakea/Laupahoehoe Complex administered by Complex Area Superintendent Valerie Takata. For the past three to four years, Laupahoehoe School has been plagued by a revolving door syndrome of having seven different principals. This situation has been difficult on the staff and especially difficult on the students.

In addition to the above situation decisions have been made without any discussion with the School Community Council (SCC) which I believe was put into place to help bring discussion for things happening at the school closer to the people it serves. This has been lacking severely until this school year as we have an acting principal who appears willing to have open discussions with the members of the SCC.

This community has organized several working groups who are diligently working to address the concerns at the school which has been in restructuring status for several years. We have a very small enrollment, partly due to the unstable situation of principals coming and going.

This bill will bring decision-making closer to the schools and would greatly benefit our school at Laupahoehoe. Again, I humbly ask for your support of House Bill 985.

Lucille V. Chung
Community Leader