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April 6, 2009

To: Finance Committee, Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Fr: Laara Albrett
RE: SB496, Charter School Funding 4/6/09 4pm Room 308

Aloha Chair Oshiro and Members of the Finance Committee,

As you juggle the many demands for support this session, I thank you for acknowledging that charter school funding was cut since prior to opening our schools. We know for a fact that charter schools have never received the funds intended by law and can provide you with those figures.

Our schools have flourished during these challenging start up years and are schools the entire state of Hawai'i can be proud of. Children love coming to school! Many students who previously had a high absentee history have not missed a day of school in years. Overall, they are growing to be more self responsible individuals, caring for their ahupua'a and the environment. Communities are strengthened by our schools positive impact. This is going on in 31 neighborhoods from Kalihi to Waimea, Moloka'i to Nanakuli, Lanikai to Pahoā. Research is showing without a doubt, charter schools are making a difference and we have cost the state less money since our share has never been equitable. Charter schools have been a deal for state government.

We ask that you at least maintain a per pupil amount that will provide our public school students with fair treatment. YOU must direct Budget and Finance to provide charter schools with funding that will sustain the education of the children whose families have chosen a PUBLIC charter school. The legislature also has a fiduciary responsibility to provide that stated in Article X, Section 1 of the Hawai'i Constitution relating to public education: 'physical facilities thereof'.

With the lower per pupil amount since opening, our budgets have been strained to provide adequate facilities. The cost of rent is paid from our per pupil allocation which then directly impacts every component of learning. There are staffing and instructional needs that have been put on the back burner due to budget constraints for years. That is not serving the children. We need your

wisdom and courage in order to sustain what we began in good faith and on a shoestring budget through no fault of our own.

Even during these times, it would be akamai to fund properly what's working in order to sustain the success we are seeing every day. Charters are a miracle. We respect the legislature and need your help on behalf of the 265 children we serve.

Mahalo,

Laara Allbrett, Director



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Aloha Representative Marcus Oshiro,

Please support the intent of SB496 which is crucial to our children's continued success. As an educator and parent of a Halau Lokahi Public Charter School graduate, I have full knowledge of the responsibility and challenges students, parents and teachers face daily. It is your obligation to provide them access to their education model of choice. If the per pupil allocation is not maintained, charter schools will not be able to honor our own obligation to our students and their families.

My son is currently pursuing degrees in ocean sciences. That would not be the case if he had not been given the opportunity to study in a charter school that excels in this field. Our children are Hawaii's most valuable resource. Please know that your efforts on our behalf are duly noted and deeply appreciated. I humbly ask the members of your committee to consider my request.

Mahalo

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Leonelle Akana".

Leonelle Akana