

2/9/2009

Testimony to the House Committee on Education
Hearing Date: Monday, February 9, 2009
2:00p.m. – Conference Room 309

LATE TESTIMONY

Testimony Submitted by David Rizor, Volcano School of Arts & Sciences

Re: HB 1686 Relating to Charter Schools, Testimony in Strong Opposition

Aloha Chair Takumi, Vice-Chair Berg, and Esteemed Members of the Committee on Education:

I appreciate the attention that is being given to charter school funding in this year's session. The root of the problem with charter school funding is not the need for a new formula but the need to follow the existing formula. I believe that the current law provides a fair funding formula:

Budget request based on:

- (1) The actual and projected enrollment figures in the current school year for each charter school;
- (2) A per-pupil amount for each regular education and special education student, which shall be equivalent to the total per-pupil cost based upon average enrollment in **all regular education cost categories, including comprehensive school support services but excluding special education services, and for all means of financing except federal funds**, as reported in the most recently-approved executive budget recommendations for the department; provided that in preparing the budget the executive director shall include an analysis of the proposed budget in relationship to the most recently published department consolidated annual financial report; provided further that the legislature may make an adjustment to the per-pupil allocation for the purposes of this section; and
- (3) Those fringe benefit costs requested shall be included in the department of budget and finance's annual budget request. No fringe benefit costs shall be charged directly to or deducted from the charter school per-pupil allocations unless they are already included in the funds distributed to the charter school.

The legislature shall make an appropriation based upon the budget request; provided that the legislature may make additional appropriations for fringe, workers' compensation, and other employee benefits, facility costs, and other requested amounts.

If there is a need to change language, section 2 should be clarified indicate that the formula amount should reflect the current Department of Education request being considered by the legislature. All charter schools advocates have been asking for is that this formula be followed.

The danger of the suggestions in HB 1686 are that it appears to step farther away from a funding concept that addresses the needs of charter schools and the intent of the legislature to provide equal or equitable funding. The language bolded above in the excerpt from the current law is very clear and easy to follow in regard to the actual computation of the funding request. There is no need to create another formula.

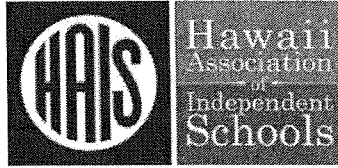
It is of great concern to me that the Department of Education be required by statute to help determine charter school funding. By creating a “department” committee to confirm the accuracy of its own numbers seems to be a case of the fox guarding the henhouse given the history of financial relationships between the department and charter schools, while having those committee members serve “at the pleasure of the board” erodes the authority and purpose of the Charter School Review Panel. Currently, the Charter School Administrative Office develops a budget according to statute, which is then reviewed and if approved by the Charter School Review Panel is passed on to the Board of Education for review. The request is then forwarded to the Department of Budget and Finance. This process seems very solid and has adequate checks to insure a proper request is received by Budget and Finance. Over the past several years, however, the request that has passed through these channels has not been fully funded and Budget and Finance provides no rationale for the actual budget request passed forward to the legislature. Then, little or no recovery of the under funded formula amount is provided once the incorrect request is received by the legislature.

This breakdown is at the heart of the charter school funding dilemma: funding the existing formula, not needing to change the formula.

I strongly encourage the committee to scrap this bill in favor of taking whatever measures necessary to ensure that charter schools receive an allocation based on the current formula already in statute.

Respectfully Submitted,

David Rizer, PhD
Education Director
Volcano School of Arts & Sciences
Via email to EDNtestimony@capitol.hawaii.gov



LATE TESTIMONY

February 9, 2009
2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 309

TESTIMONY TO
THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB 1686 – Relating to Charter Schools

Dear Chair Takumi, Vice Chair Berg, and Members of the Committee:

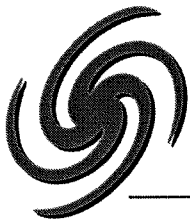
My name is Robert Witt, and I am executive director of the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools (HAIS), which represents 97 private and independent schools across our state and is a member of the Charter School Review Panel.

HAIS supports the intent of House Bill 1686 – Relating to Education, which establishes a charter school funding mechanism to ensure that charter schools receive fair and equitable funding. We appreciate the Committee's efforts to address this important issue; however, we have concerns regarding the formulas proposed by this measure for the calculation of per-pupil allocations for charter school operations and facilities.

As written, the formulas do not account for all of the operational expenses for which the charter schools are responsible. Excluded are expenses related to campus lease rent and utilities, special education student support and supervision, and after school and adult education programs, all of which are essential to the charter schools' ability to provide their students with safe, suitable learning environments and the members of their communities with educational opportunities that extend beyond the regular school day and curriculum. The formulas also overlook the costs related to the operation of the Charter School Office – since these expenses exceed the Charter School Review Panel's own available funding they are absorbed by the charter schools themselves, thereby further reducing their per-pupil allocations.

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

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this important matter.



COUNCIL FOR NATIVE HAWAIIAN ADVANCEMENT

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Testimony regarding HB 1686

Attention: House of Representatives, Committee on Education
Representative Roy Takumi, Chair
Representative Lyla Berg, Vice Chair

From: Robin Puanani Danner, President & CEO
Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement

RE: **Testimony regarding HB 1686**
Monday, February 9, 2009 at 2:00 p.m., Conference Room 309

Aloha Committee on Education, Chair Takumi and Vice Chair Berg:

The Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement (CNHA), a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote and enhance the cultural, economic and community development of Native Hawaiians, supports the intent of HB 1686, which aims to ensure that charter schools receive fair funding by establishing charter school funding formulas.

The formula in HB 1686 proposes to establish a per-pupil operational budget allocation for charter schools. CNHA supports fair and equitable funding, specifically, to ensure that charter school students receive a per-student amount that is fair and proportionate to the amount allocated for all public school students.

Additionally, CNHA is pleased that this bill attempts to address past budget discrepancies regarding facilities and maintenance allocations for charter schools by also establishing a formula to determine charter school budgets for facilities. Similar to our testimony above with respect to the charter schools' operational budgets, we hope the formula to determine the budgets for charter schools' facilities will be fair and equitable as compared with all public schools.

Research has shown that Hawaii's charter schools have achieved remarkable accomplishments in reaching at-risk youth; increasing family involvement; tailoring educational experiences; advancing statistics of graduation and higher education; and providing choices for Hawaii's population. It would be shameful if the successes of charter schools thus far were diminished and perhaps even negated by not adequately and fairly funding them.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 1686.

**Testimony on HB 1686
RELATING TO CHARTER SCHOOLS**

**COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Representative Roy Takuni, Chair
Representative Lyla Berg, Vice Chair**

**Monday, February 9, 2009, 2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 309, State Capitol**

My name is Sharon Ferguson-Quick and as private citizen and the mother of a charter school graduate I'm providing written testimony on the measure Relating to Charter Schools (HB 1686). ~~I support this bill in its effort to establish a charter school funding mechanism to ensure that charter schools receive fair and equitable funding.~~ *I'm asking the committee to ensure that their decision on this bill supports and strengthens charter schools.* (SQ)

My son and only child and my pride and joy is a really good kid. He's friendly and out going and a really great artist. His teachers have always found him pleasant in class and our family supportive of him and his education. But he has always struggled in school. There was no learning disability that test could find, but there has always been some kind of learning difficulty. But he has a pretty determine *mama* and he's a hard working young man, he moved forward. However, by the time he completed what should have been his sophomore year in high school he was behind for graduating with his class, a bit discouraged and beginning to believe he couldn't be a success in school. He knew that success was tied to his success in life. He was beginning to doubt that his dreams of being an artist, no matter how much talent he had and how much mommy wanted him to study it in college wouldn't happen. He knew he wanted to do it but he didn't think he could. And then we found Myron B. Thompson Academy Charter School.

That school, it's principle Ms. Diane Oshiro and the gifted committed teachers and staff there and their board gave my child his dreams and his future back. That program figured out how he needed to work in order to learn. They didn't try to force a round peg in to a square hole because that was the only way to do a thing at their school. When I sat with him in a counselor's meeting during his first year at Myron B and she asked him what would he do if he knew he couldn't fail and he said he would go to college to study art and digital media. I realized that was the first time I'd heard him say he wanted that, not just that mom wanted that for him and I knew we had found an extraordinary place for his education. He had to work really hard to do it but he caught up and graduated with his class in 2007. He never complained about the work just talked about the great teachers, he felt they were right there with him working hard.

He's currently a student in the digital media program at Leeward Community College with plans to attend the Art Institute at San Diego when he finished there. He doesn't doubt that he can do it.

My son had spent most of his education in private schools but it was Myron B. Thompson Academy a Charter School here in Honolulu that set his dreams free and gave him back his future. I know you have tough decisions to make especially this legislative session but I'm asking to you make ~~this~~ ^{the} decision that gives Hawaii's children their dreams and their futures. Make the decision that supports charter schools make sure they're funded, ~~Make sure this bill which I strongly support~~ *equitably.* (SQ)

Sharon Ferguson-Quick

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