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**LATE TESTIMONY**

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The Twenty-Fifth Legislature, State of Hawaii  
Hawaii State House of Representatives  
Committee on Education  
Testimony by  
Hawaii Government Employees Association  
February 01, 2010

H.B. 1988 – PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO THE HAWAII CONSTITUTION TO  
ALLOW THE GOVERNOR TO APPOINT MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF  
EDUCATION AND THE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION UPON  
CONFIRMATION BY BOTH THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND THE  
SENATE

The Hawaii Government Employees' Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO provides the following comments.

This measure proposes a constitutional amendment to Article X, Sections 2 and 3 of the Hawaii Constitution to allow the governor to appoint the members of the board of education.

The governance model for public education is not the panacea for student achievement although it may be a component for purposes of accountability. Historically educators have supported an elected school board but that position is being evaluated. As a general rule, the electorate has remained apathetic and we've seen the results with "blank votes" receiving the most votes.

Educators want leadership in the public school system. They want public officials including the governor, legislature and superintendent that support public education. Principals are educational leaders of their schools and they need the support of the system in order to do their jobs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify to H.B. 1988.

Respectfully submitted,

Leiomalama Desha  
Executive Assistant

To: COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, Rep. Takumi, Chair & Rep. Berg, Vice Chair

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, THE TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE, REGULAR SESSION OF 2010

Testimony for: HB1988, HB1989, HB 2177, HB 2178, HB 2376, HB 2377, HB 2424, HB 2428

DATE: Monday, February 1, 2010

TIME: 2:00 p.m.

PLACE: Conference Room 309, State Capitol, 415 South Beretania Street

Dear Chair Takumi, Vice Chair Berg, and members of the Education Committee,

Hawaii's public education system is broken. There is a consensus emerging statewide that something needs to be done. I was heartened to read the joint letter in the Advertiser yesterday authored by Hawaii's past three Democrat Governors. In their public letter, they endorse many of the same concepts that we've been debating about for years now.

We have to face the facts – something we have not truly done before. Principals, teachers, students, and parents are frustrated.

The education system lacks direct accountability under the BOE-DOE-Legislature-Governor leadership vacuum. No one is clearly driving the education bus.

The return on investment for the yearly \$2 billion spent on education is poor student achievement and preparation. Colleges and employers often complain about high school graduates' preparation and readiness to enter higher education or the workforce. Our students continue to rank almost near the bottom on national educational assessments.

These conditions are obviously not for lack of money. Hawaii's public school system sorely lacks direct and clear responsibility and accountability.

Your committee is reviewing many bills on education governance but is failing to consider the ideas contained in the Lingle-Aiona package. Please gut and replace HB 2177, HB 2376, or HB 2424 and replace it with the contents of HB 2553 in its entirety. Also, please gut and replace HB 1989, HB 2178, HB 2377, or HB 2428 and replace it with the language of HB2552 in its entirety.

Of all the bills being heard today, I believe the suggestions in HB 2552 & HB2553 would help students, teachers, principals, parents, and community members to know who to hold accountable in our public education system. I am not in support of measures that make our public education system more convoluted than it already is.

I would also support the language found in HB 2376 that states "restructure the department of education to ensure that it is decentralized in a manner to promote student growth and achievement

and greater accountability, monitor and protect student rights provided by law” but give this authority to the Superintendent under the governance structure of HB 2552 and HB 2553.

Sincerely,

Lynn Finnegan  
Minority Leader

From Joseph  
Cynthia  
Randoife

mirror Lynn Finneen  
~~accountability~~  
issues

1

I support the complete overhaul of the education system.

I have only one child -- in the public school system and it is a BLACK HOLE experience. It is a nightmarish buraracy from the bottom to the top. It is ineffective.

You will hear today many educated opinions but I would like to bring it home. I would like to give you 3 personal examples of a broken educational system from a parents perspective that will portray a lack of accountability from the bottom up and <sup>top down</sup> assuradely mirror parent frustration across the state.

BP

Schools have an obligation to keep kids safe.

who is the  
Superintendant  
accountable to?

In elementary school my child came home sunburnt from school one day.

I noticed the school had no shade for PE activities or special May Day type functions. Children were also made to stand in the direct sun (about 200 school days) for 5 minutes each and every day, while waiting for the lunch line to open up and then finally move slowly forward.

I wrote and asked for the children to be able to stand in the shade, which was 1 foot away, under the roof line and recommended other minor ideas to eliminate sun exposure. I attached a dermatologists letter in support explaining that skin cancer happens because of the **daily repetition** to exposure.

The principal, resisting ANY changes what-so-ever, told me .....” this is the way we have always done it”. ~~I spoke to the BSE~~. I went up the

chain of command to the TOP to the state dist. superintendant.  
Ultimately I received a letter back from the state superintendant telling me that my child should wear sunscreen.

**Who was she accountable to?**

2.

Another black hole experience is current. At Niu Valley school, (an International baccuralte candidate school

A teacher admits she lets her own students grade the students papers.

SHE admits some answers ARE marked wrong BUT in fact right. But she complains she is too busy with too many students to re-grade the papers.

ONE on ONE help requests are rejected because she says she does not WANT to do any one on one and has too many students. AND we are told not to make any demands from her to do so.

**Who is she accountable to?**

Going up the ladder (or into the black hole) hoping the vice principal will intervene, he tells us "I do not find any fault with the teachers grading policy. AND we are told as parents by him we are not allowed to make any demands of them when asking for help for our child.

**Who is he accountable to?**

If a child gets an answer right and it is marked wrong -- Confused they likely will get it wrong on the states exam . Now you know why the test scores are bad. Does anyone really care? Our children deserve better.

**Who is accountable?**

My last example is a parent's request to the principal made

In writing 17 Dec and 20 JAN and multiple voicemail asking for a FERPA hearing date. As of today FEB 1 no date has ever been given.

**Who is accountable?**

Answer: No one is being held accountable. Parents /taxpayers want accountability.

Why don't we grade the teachers, principals, and anyone in educational position every year! Parents need a voice in this process.

We will vote our <sup>position</sup> ~~possession~~ and ....Quite frankly , despite being told not to, we DEMAND ~~it~~ <sup>accountability</sup>.