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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

LATE TESTIMONY

H.B. 2376– PROPOSING AMENDMENTS TO THE HAWAII CONSTITUTION
RELATING TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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

This measure proposes amendments Article X, Sections 2 and 3 of the Hawaii Constitution to allow the governor to appoint the members of the board of education from a pool of candidates with the advice and consent of the senate. It also expands the authority 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. 2376.

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