

Monday, February 1, 2010
2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 309

TESTIMONY TO
THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB 2377 – Relating to Education

Chair Takumi, Vice Chair Berg, and Members of the Committees:

My name is Robert Witt and I am executive director of the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools (HAIS), which represents 99 private and independent schools in Hawaii and educates over 33,000 students statewide.

The Association is in strong support of the intent of House Bill 2377, which proposes constitutional amendments to Article X, Sections 2 and 3, of the Hawaii Constitution relating to the Board of Education.

HAIS is encouraged by this proposal by which the members of the Board of Education would be nominated and, by and with the advice of the Senate, appointed by the Governor from pools of qualified candidates presented to the Governor by a Board of Education selection advisory committee.

HAIS believes that discussion of the merits of this measure is urgently needed during the 2010 Legislative Session, and further believes that this measure may be aptly designed, in general, to increase accountability concerning public education in Hawaii.

That this measure also proposes to empower the Board of Education to restructure and decentralize public education for the purposes of increasing student achievement and protecting student rights provides added incentive for our association to support ongoing discussion of this measure in the weeks ahead.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the intent of this measure. Our association pledges its participation in the ongoing dialogue concerning this measure and suggests that much more discussion will be required concerning the details already proposed concerning size of board, terms of board members, selection of board members, election of officers, and so forth.

We strongly urge the Committee on Education to

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

Reuben S. F. Wong
Delwyn H. W. Wong
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January 29, 2010

Committee on Education (EDN),
House of Representatives
415 South Beretania Street, Room 309
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814

Attention: The Honorable Roy M. Takumi, Chair

Re: Support: HB 2377, Relating To Education

Dear Chair Takumi, Vice-Chair Berg and members of the committee:

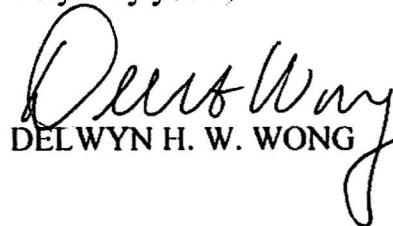
I strongly support HB 2377, which promotes accountability and efficiency in education. Our current system of an elected Board of Education ("BOE") is dysfunctional, inefficient, and broken. We can and need to do better for Hawaii's keiki *now*. Their futures – and ours – depend on it.

Hawaii's elected Board system has been in place for 45 years, with *dismal results*. In 2009, Hawaii's 4th grade students ranked 38th in the nation in math. Our 8th grade students scored even worse, coming in at 43rd nationwide. These results are obviously unacceptable.

More money will *not* solve the problem. Hawaii already spends over \$11,000 per pupil, compared to \$9,666 per pupil spent nationwide. In fact, Hawaii outspends 37 states other states in dollars per pupil, yet 30 of those states still rank higher than Hawaii. Total State expenditures in 2009 were \$4 billion. Of that amount, \$2.3 billion, or a whopping 58%, were related to education.

The problem is not *how much* we spend – it's *how ineptly* we spend. BOE mismanagement of our education dollars is crippling our keiki, ripping off the parents in this State – and it needs to be fixed now. I urge you to vote in favor of HB 2377, to restore accountability and efficiency in Hawaii public education.

Very truly yours,


DELWYN H. W. WONG

DHWW:kq



Monday, February 1, 2010
2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 309

TESTIMONY TO
THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB 2377 – Relating to Education

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

My name is Randy Baldemor and I write on behalf of Hawai'i's Children First. Hawai'i's Children First is an organization comprised of concerned citizens who support a number of education reforms, including an appointed board of education.

We are strongly supportive of the intent of HB 2377. In view of the current state of our education system and widespread public dissatisfaction, we believe the time is ripe for letting the community decide on how board of education members, who are entrusted with shaping statewide education policy, should be selected.

We believe that any discussion about the governance structure of our public education system should begin with a simple question:

Is Hawai'i's public education system serving our children and our community effectively?

While there are many examples of excellent principals, teachers and students, there is one inescapable conclusion – the system as a whole is letting our children and the community down. Consider the following statistics:

- 74% of our 4th graders and 80% of our 8th graders were below proficient in reading;
- 64% of our 4th graders and 75% of our 8th graders were below proficient in mathematics.

58% of our schools in 2008 did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress. If we consider National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores and compare Hawai'i to the

U.S. average and “comparable” states (as defined by the Legislature, DOE and Hawai‘i Education Policy Center in 2007), we are well behind in achievement:

- In 2009, Hawai‘i ranked 38th among all states in fourth grade math and 43rd among all states in eighth grade math;
- In 2007, Hawai‘i ranked 44th among all states in fourth grade reading and 47th among all states in eighth grade reading.

Despite slight progress in recent years, we are still behind the majority of states, including the vast majority of those who are deemed “comparable”.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, we rank 13th in the United States in terms of public education spending. We spend somewhere in the range of 40% to 50% or more of our general excise tax revenue on public education. Despite funding levels that appear to be very competitive with other states, we have one of the lowest amounts of instructional time in the year, made even worse by the school furloughs.

Who is responsible for the troubled state of our public education system?

There are certainly many factors that influence poor student achievement, especially the quality of instruction in the classroom. But, when the education system on a statewide level seems to be failing, we must look to leadership and governance.

Under our state constitution, the Board of Education has the responsibility to formulate statewide education policy. For approximately 45 years, our Board of Education has been elected and, during that period, spanning many terms of elected board members, the performance of our education system has been unsatisfactory. The problem is systemic and the method of selecting Board of Education candidates is a significant part of the problem.

How do we improve the system?

Since the 45 year “experiment” of an elected board has not led to satisfactory results, the time is appropriate to give strong consideration to a system that appoints the Board of Education. An appointed board is the most reasonable and statistically favorable approach. An appointed board has the following benefits:

- Greater accountability and a system in which the governor must take greater ownership;
- Better screening of candidates; and
- A process for selecting a board that can help ensure good judgment and expertise in education policy, school leadership, teaching and other relevant subject areas, such as business.

Most state boards (35) are appointed. Based on our analysis of the governance structures of other states and NAEP scores, nine of the top ten state boards in terms of NAEP

achievement are appointed. At the bottom of the rankings, fifty percent of states in the bottom ten have elected boards, while only twenty percent have appointed boards. There are only five states with mixed boards or no board at all.

While we recognize Hawai'i is unique and many factors have an influence upon student achievement, an appointed board is the best option. An appointed board will provide a needed change that promotes more thorough consideration of board candidates and greater accountability. We expect, in turn, this will help to promote stronger education policy that makes a difference throughout the education system and, particularly, in the classroom.

Thus, we strongly urge the Committee to pass HB 2377 to restore accountability and efficiency in public education and to support a more prosperous education system that places Hawai'i's children first.

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 S. Beretania St.

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

Support HB 2177 and HB 2178

Hawaii's schools are failing and it isn't due to lack of funding or oversight. It is due to the lack of accountability and too much overhead. When many are responsible such as the Board of Education and/or the Legislature, then no one is responsible. The Board of Education (BOE) is unneeded bureaucracy. Eliminate BOE. Let our tax dollars, time and efforts go directly to hard working, dedicated teachers. I strongly recommend the Governor appoint the Superintendent of the Department of Education. Only then can Hawaii citizens hold the Governor responsible for what transpires in the Department of Education.

Oppose HB 1998, HB 2376, HB 1989, HB 2377, HB 2424, HB 2428

These Bills needlessly retain the Board of Education, and put the Senate, or the Board of Education Advisory Council with the Legislature between the Governor and the appointment process and increase or reapportion membership in the BOE. Eliminate the BOE. Allow the Governor to appoint the Superintendent.

Two Bills are not being considered today that relate closely to these scheduled Bills. Please consider giving **HB 2552** (could replace HBs 1989, 2178, 2377, 2428) and **HB 2553** (could replace HBs 2177, 2376, 2424) hearings as alternative solutions.

Sincerely,

Mary Smart
Mililani, HI