

SB2121



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To: Senate Committee on Judiciary and Government Operations
From: Cathy L. Takase, Acting Director
Hearing: Friday, February 19, 2010, 11:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Room 016
Re: Testimony on S.B. 2121
Relating to the Early Learning Council

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on S.B. 2121.

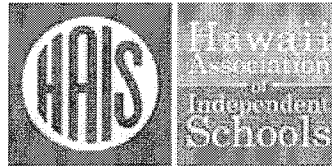
OIP takes no position on this bill, which would allow the Early Learning Council to hold meetings by teleconference. However, OIP is testifying to explain the current state of the law regarding long-distance meetings and to recommend that a purpose clause be added to this bill explaining why this particular board's long-distance meetings should be held under a different scheme than applicable to other Sunshine Law boards.

The Sunshine Law already allows boards to hold long-distance meetings with appropriate protections for the public. Section 92-3.5, providing for videoconference meetings, was most recently amended in 2006 to allow a videoconference meeting to continue if the video connection goes down but the audio connection remains. At that time the legislature declined, however, to allow boards to meet purely by teleconference. In the present session, S.B. 2710, scheduled for hearing this Friday by the Committee on Economic Development and Technology, proposes to allow teleconference meetings for all boards and commissions.

This bill is specific to the Early Learning Council. If this Committee believes it is necessary to provide a different method of holding a long-distance meeting that applies only to

one board, OIP would suggest that this Committee amend the bill to add a purpose clause explaining why the Early Learning Council in particular is unable to effectively use the existing long-distance meeting provision applicable to all Sunshine Law boards.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Friday, February 19, 2010
11:00 a.m.
Conference Room 016

TESTIMONY TO
THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

RE: SB 2121 – Relating to the Early Learning Council

Dear Chair Taniguchi, Vice Chair Takamine, 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 99 private and independent schools in Hawaii and educates over 33,000 students statewide.

The Association is in **strong support of Senate Bill 2121** – Relating to the Early Learning Council, which allows the Early Learning Council to conduct meetings by teleconference, and sets out quorum requirements and public notice and participation requirements for teleconference meetings.

HAIS has worked collaboratively over the past few years with the leadership of the Senate Committee on Education to design, implement, and advance the work of the new Early Learning Council.

We understand there are presently some challenges related to the protocol for Early Learning Council meetings; this bill provides some specific remedies that will allow the Council to convene its meetings on a more cost effective basis, while simultaneously creating a more transparent and inclusive process for Council members for whom travel and time constraints make it difficult or impractical to attend meetings in person.

We strongly urge the Senate Committee on Education and Housing to pass this measure and, in so doing, increase the efficacy and efficiency of the work of the Council.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

TESTIMONY TO
THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Friday, February 19, 2010

11:00 a.m.

Conference Room 016

RE: SB 2121 – Relating to the Early Learning Council

Dear Chair Taniguchi, Vice Chair Takamine, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony. My name is Robert Peters and I currently serve as the Chair of the Early Learning Council established by Act 14 in 2008. The thirteen member council supports this bill as it would facilitate the Council's work and increase the opportunity for transparency of its meetings.

Senate Bill 2121 allowing the Council to meet by teleconference has three distinct advantages over the current set-up: first, it would allow those not able to be physically present at the Council's meetings to participate which has particularly positive implications for neighbor island members along with reducing travel costs; second, it enhances the possibility of achieving a quorum at all meetings since teleconference participation shall qualify as being "present" at the meeting wherever the location; and, third, it offers members of the public increased opportunities to participate since the teleconference locations will all be open to the public.

This bill offers a solution to the problems faced by some of our members who find it difficult to travel to one location and again opens the meetings to many more from the public by including alternative locations. While the cost reduction alone at this time might be justification enough for this bill, it is truly the increased transparency in which we may gain the most as the public is invited to be an on-going and increasing participant in our discussion of this vitally important topic, early childhood learning---the cornerstone of our state's future sustainability.

I strongly urge the House Committee on Education to pass this measure and in so doing both the efficacy and efficiency with which the Early Learning Council is able to carry on its most important work.

Thank you.