

SB2281

Date of Hearing: Wednesday, February 3, 2010

Committee: Senate Committee on Education and
Housing

Person Testifying: Garrett Toguchi, Chairperson, Board of Education

Title of Bill: S.B. No. 2281, Relating to Education

Purpose of Bill: Amends the salary caps set in statute of the superintendent of education, deputy superintendent, assistant superintendents, and complex area superintendents.

Board's Position: Chairperson Sakamoto, Vice Chairperson Kidani, and members of the Senate Committee on Education and Housing, thank you for the opportunity to comment on S.B. No. 2281.

The Board of Education (Board) notes that S.B. No. 2281 would amend the salary caps set in statute of the superintendent of education, deputy superintendent, assistant superintendents, and complex area superintendents.

While S.B. No. 2281 retains the Board's authority to set the salaries of the superintendent, deputy superintendent, and the other Department of Education (DOE) leadership positions specified in law, the Board would like to encourage legislative support for S.B. No. 2434 and H.B. No. 2306.

S.B. No. 2434 and H.B. No. 2306, companion bills, would repeal the salary caps of the superintendent, deputy superintendent, assistant superintendents, and complex area superintendents, as well as the state librarian, leaving the Board with full authority and latitude to set the salaries of these leadership positions.

As the appointing body of the superintendent, authorizing the Board with greater flexibility over the salary of this position will enable the Board to establish a salary that is commensurate with various factors, including the scope and responsibilities of the position, as well as the experience and skills that an individual would bring to the position.

The Board notes that the cap on the superintendent's salary was last established in 2000. The Board believes that the salary of this leadership position must be competitive to attract and retain highly qualified and effective individuals to lead our public school system. Furthermore, with the salaries of the deputy superintendent, assistant superintendents, and complex area superintendents capped under current law at no greater than 80 percent of the superintendent's salary, there is significant disparity among these salaries with many principals and other school-, district-, and state-

level administrators who earn more than the deputy superintendent, assistant superintendents, and complex area superintendents.

While the salaries of other state positions have increased, the salary of the superintendent and the DOE leadership's salaries that are tied to the superintendent's salary cap, have not increased in nearly a decade. There are four principals whose salaries are higher than the superintendent's \$150,000 salary cap. About 100 principals earn between \$121,000 to \$149,000, and are within 80 percent of the superintendent's salary, and about the same number of principals are paid more than the deputy superintendent. A far greater number of principals earn more than complex area superintendents. It is clear that the salaries of the DOE's top leadership are not commensurate with their scope and breadth of responsibilities.

A January 2009 report by Watson Wyatt and the DOE included a compensation analysis of the salary of the superintendent, deputy superintendent, and complex area superintendents, and the salaries of the assistant superintendents. The report indicated that:

- Hawaii's superintendent salary of \$150,000 is 59.87 percent below the market average of \$250,537 for comparable

position;

- Hawaii's deputy superintendent salary of \$120,000 is 69.88 percent below the market average of \$171,723 for comparable position;
- A Hawaii complex area superintendent's salary of \$115,000 is 81.40 percent below the market average of \$141,271 for comparable position; and
- The Hawaii assistant superintendent-chief financial officer's salary of \$115,000 is 67.42 percent below the market average of \$170,578 for comparable position.

A March/April 2008 Scholastic Administrator article that included the 25 largest school districts in the United States listed Hawaii as the tenth largest in size, with Hawaii's superintendent earning \$150,000, the lowest paid superintendent among the top 10 districts and the lowest paid among all 25 districts listed.

To hire and retain individuals with the best expertise, knowledge, and experience to run our public school system, the Board requires the ability to attract the best quality professionals to these leadership positions. As a community, we must hold the positions of the superintendent and the superintendent's responsibilities in

the highest regard because it is through the superintendent's leadership, vision, commitment, and talents that contribute to the running of a quality public school system. Affirming the importance of this top leadership position must extend to attractive, fair, and competitive compensation.

The breadth of responsibilities, complexities of the job, and the importance of the superintendent's position is reflected in that the superintendent oversees a statewide public school system of 258 public schools, 15 complex areas, and 172,327 students.

The Board firmly believes that the salaries of the superintendent, deputy superintendent, assistant superintendents, and complex area superintendents should reflect the importance of their positions, the breadth and scope of their work, and the worth that must be extended to draw a high caliber of individuals to the positions.

The Board is currently developing a search process to hire a permanent superintendent. The Board believes that this bill will enable the Board to attract and recruit a greater number of applicants to lead our public education system, and allow Board

members to select from a range of individuals with multiple talents, and leadership, academic, and professional experiences. The flexibility of the Board to establish competitive and fair salaries for these positions, along with performance measurements, will ensure accountability and feedback to these individuals.

Lastly, the Board views bills that support increased flexibility for determining fair and competitive salaries for the superintendent and the superintendent's leadership are proactive measures that affirm the premium value we should place on education in our State.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.