

SB2350

Date of Hearing: Monday, February 8, 2010

Committee: Senate Committee on Education and  
Housing

Person Testifying: Garrett Toguchi, Chairperson, Board of Education

Title of Bill: S.B. No. 2350, Proposing an Amendment to Article X, Section 2, of the  
Hawaii Constitution

Purpose of Bill: Proposes an amendment to Article X, Section 2, of the Hawaii State  
Constitution to require the Board of Education (Board) student member  
to be selected by secondary public school students at an election held by  
the Hawaii State Student Council to allow the Board student member to  
vote on all matters before the Board except for finance or personnel  
issues.

Board's Position: Chairperson Sakamoto, Vice Chairperson Kidani, and members of the  
Senate Committee on Education and Housing, thank you for the  
opportunity to submit testimony in support of S.B. No. 2350.

The Board welcomes and appreciates the perspectives and insight of the  
Board student member in representing the views of students to the  
Board. At board meetings, the Board student member shares the  
educational needs of students, conveys student concerns, and  
participates in Board member discussions.

As an elected board, we recognize that citizen input in government is  
critical for sound decision-making. The Board student member's input

and perspective, like other educational stakeholders, is essential in developing sound educational policies and decision making. We believe the Board student member enhances the Board's understanding and knowledge of current school issues. The student voice is an important and necessary factor in educational policymaking.

The Board affirms its support of allowing the Board student member to vote on matters before the Board, except for budgetary and personnel matters.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.



SB 2350  
PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO ARTICLE X, SECTION 2, OF THE HAWAIÏI  
CONSTITUTION  
Committee on Education and Housing

Date: February 8, 2010  
225

Time: 1:45 p.m.

Room:

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The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) supports SB2350. Allowing the student board of education member to be a voting member of the Board of Education except for those matters relating to fiscal and personnel issues is highly appropriate given the Department of Education's objective to inculcate positive values of leadership and citizenship in our youth. Moreover, the act also mandates the election of the student board of education member to be elected by public secondary school students. Again, this is a highly appropriate action given the department's mission to engage students in understanding their roles, rights, and responsibilities as citizens and to recognize them in civic action. Secondary school elections actively engage our students in civic responsibility and help to engender life-long voter participation. As a result, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs supports SB 2350.

To: Senator Norman Sakamoto, Chair  
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice-chair  
Committee on Education and Housing

From: Steven Chen

Date: February 04, 2010

Subject: Support of SB 2350, Allowing Student Board of Education Member the Right to Vote

Greetings, my name is Steven Chen from Kalaheo High School and I am currently a part of my school's student council. I am writing in support to SB 2350, because I believe that this bill can give students a stronger voice in their own education. As members of this greater community I think that we should be given a chance to be represented within the government system to voice our own concerns that we face in school every day and there is no better way than allowing the BOE student member to represent us in his opinions and vote.

Our BOE student member represents all of the students in the state of Hawaii and at the same time he or she is a student themselves by attending a normal high school. This means our student representative would have a better grasp of issues happening on our schools, then other adult BOE members.

The students of Hawaii had shown their support to this bill in surveys and during the Secondary Student Conference. For years this bill has been pushed by the SSC and voted for with a landslide victory. Also in a survey in 2008 more than 70% of all students had voted in favor for this topic.

This is why I urge the committee to support SB 2350 and to push for the change in the constitution to allow the BOE student member to vote. This way we can to secure a better future for all students in the state of Hawaii. I thank you for your time and attention.

To: Senator Norman Sakamoto, Chair  
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair  
Members of the Senate Education and Housing Committee

From: Monique Ishikawa, Kalaheo High School Student Council

Date: February 5, 2010

Subject: Support of SB2350, BOE Student Member Voting Rights

Hi! My name is Monique Ishikawa and I am currently a sophomore at Kalaheo High School. I am in support of SB2350, and would like to share my opinion. I believe it is very important for the student member to have voting rights. The Student Member is a direct link between the students and the State. And with a student representative, we have a solid voice and influence on important decisions. Most of these decisions are about the students anyway.

So far states such as California, Maryland, Massachusetts, Tennessee and Vermont have already granted their student member full or partial voting rights. And it is working out just fine for them. If they can do it, then why not us? The student member that is chosen to be on the BOE board is well qualified and fully understands what he/she is doing. The Hawaii State Student Council makes sure the student member is qualified through high standards of selection. No other members go through the same process.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony. I am fully in support of SB2350 and encourage members of the Board to change the Hawaii constitution to include partial voting rights for the BOE student member.  
Aloha!

February 8, 2010

To: Senator Norman Skamoto  
Senator Michelle Kidani  
Members of the Senate Education and Housing Committee

From: DiShanté Lewis, Kalaheo High School Student Council

Subject: Support of the Senate Bill 2350, Voting Rights for the Student BOE Member

Aloha! My name is DiShanté Lewis; I am a senior at Kalaheo high as well as a member of Kalaheo's student council. I am in full support of SB2350, and I would like you to show your support as well. The student BOE member is the sole representation of 15% of Hawaii's population but has no voting rights on the matters that directly affect the students. With the vote of the student BOE member the opinions of the students which are often disregarded in the policies passed by the Board the voice of the students can be heard.

The Student BOE member is the only member of the Board who spends everyday in the State's schools so they know what the students want so their vote should count. States such as California, Maryland, Massachusetts, Tennessee, and Vermont all support the student BOE member by granting them partial or full voting rights. All responsibilities of a BOE member are given to the student member except for that of voting. The Student member goes through the most rigorous selection process of any other BOE member, hold the same responsibilities, and keeps up with school tasks so they should be granted voting rights on the decisions that directly affect themselves and their peers.

In granting the Student BOE Member partial voting rights in the decisions of the BOE the direct link between the schools and the Board of Education will finally have a voice. I thank you for your time. I trust you will show your support for Senate Bill 2350.