

SB 2591, SD1

Testimony Presented Before the
Committee on Ways and Means
Wednesday, February 24, 2010 at 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 211

Written Personal Testimony

By

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By statue as Dean, College of Education

SB 2591, SD1 (SSCR2271): Relating to Hawaii Teacher Standards Board

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Tsutsui and Members of the Committee:

I am submitting my personal testimony in general support of SB 2591 with some recommended changes. The HTSB has worked consistently this past year to address challenges within the organization and to better serve the state of Hawaii and its teachers. While much has been accomplished, there is still more to do. I appreciate the intent of this legislation to encourage ongoing changes in the HTSB and to recognize the importance of maintaining the HTSB as an independent agency with the responsibility of licensing teachers for Hawaii.

I believe most of the portions of WB 2591 are manageable and in fact reflect areas where the HTSB is already working to make improvements. Specifically, the board has discussed including expenditure information in the annual report and better monitoring of expenses. The board already has plans to review its fee structure, especially as the new fee processing procedure gets underway. HTSB recognizes that fees may need to be increased to pay for expenses necessary to adequately manage the licensing function. The HTSB has already begun to shift some less essential functions to other agencies as is evidenced by the move to require all teacher education programs to become nationally accredited, thus relieving burdens on the local staff to train evaluators, conduct site visits, and write accreditation reports.

The Board recently began discussing its role in providing support for teachers pursuing recognition through the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and adequacy of the renewal process and is set to name a subcommittee to make recommendations for change. Finally, I believe it is important to clarify the respective roles of the HTSB and the Department of Education (DOE) to ensure better communication and a smoother process for teacher candidates.

In terms of having the Attorney General (AG) or designee as a member of the Board, I can say that the Board is in critical need of advice from the AG's office. If having a representative on the Board ensures that perspective is present, I see that as a positive thing. Alternatively, I think there may be other ways of ensuring the presence of the AGs office without necessarily having a person as a member of the Board. However, I am not opposed to the proposal to make it an ex officio appointment.

The one area in SB259 that I believe is not workable is the creation of the investigative panel with duties to investigate and make recommendations based on principal evaluations. Principal evaluation of teachers is an employment issue that is bound by contractual obligations. HTSB has no access to that information, and for both FERPA and contractual reasons, DOE would not be able to share it with HTSB. I feel that we have a process in place (as outlined in our rules) to manage disciplinary cases and contested cases as they are brought to our attention. I do not believe the additional expenses associated with having an investigative panel are warranted. Perhaps the HTSB can further consider how to assess teacher performance as it reviews its renewal process.

I thank your for this opportunity to provide my written testimony and for your commitment to improving the teacher licensing process in Hawaii and to helping the HTSB become more efficient and effective.