

LATE TESTIMONY

February 12, 2009

The Honorable Senator Sakamoto

Senate Education Committee

Hawai'i State Capitol
415 S. Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813 Room 225

Re: In Strong Support for Senate Bills 798 and 799, Board of Education; Student Member:

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Robert Firme, from the Hawaii State Student Council and I would like to speak in strong support on behalf of Senate Bills 798 and 799.

In the State of Hawaii, there are 285 public schools serving approximately 181,355 students. However, with a student population so big, one would expect that some form of student representation should be allocated. Yes, it is true that all 181,355 students are represented by the single BOE student member on the board, but what's more is that this elected representative, voicing the positions of the 181,355 students, does not even have the same right as the other Board members to vote on concerns delegated to the mass student populace. All these decisions concerning the students may have the verbal representation orated by the student member, but these Board decisions have been passed without the truest form of student representation of the student voice and stance, that can only come in the form of direct voting.

The BOE student member is a competent student, one that has been screened and approved by the students and monitored by the adults, such as the HSSC advisor and Board themselves, acting out most of the duties and responsibilities expected of each member, goes to every Board function, listens to the same concerns as the rest of the Board, and essentially carries out the duties as every other member. The only real differences separating the student member from the rest of the Board is his/her age and the right to vote; what issue and apprehensions could be so problematical as to deprive an active member of the board of their right to vote! The student member should be given the right to vote on Board decisions because he/she is in direct representation and connection with the students, is knowledgeable enough to understand the wills of the students, and competent enough to make intelligent decisions to protect the students' welfare.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bills 798 and 799.

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House Bill Number 86, SB 799, SB 798 & BOE Committee
Title: Board of Education Student Member Voting Rights

SB 798
Good afternoon. My name is Evan Takemoto and I am a Junior at Aiea High School. I strongly support ~~House Bill Number 86~~. Currently the BOE student member attends and takes part in numerous organizations such as The Hawaii State Student Council, Secondary Student Conference, ~~Hawaii YMCA Youth Legislature~~ and also servers as a non-voting member on the Board of Education.

I support this bill and I believe this bill should be supported because the BOE student member represents over 182,000 students consisting ^{of approximately} 250 Secondary Schools in the State of Hawaii. As the current position the member upholds, he/she may only voice their suggestion, concerns and state their opinions but is not able to vote on decisions that are being made by the board.

Over the years this topic has been brought numerous times at the Secondary Student Conference and has also been voted into support. Current states such as California, Maryland, Massachusetts, Tennessee, Iowa, Washington DC and even U.S. territory of Guam has a student member that has either partial or full voting rights. Also, ~~from my understanding the House Education Committee unanimously voted in support for student member voting rights and our recent Governor Linda Lingle agreed that the Student Board Member should have the right to vote.~~ ^{SB 86 on Dec. 4, 2008}

With that statement, please help support ~~House Bill Number 86~~ for the Board of Education Student Member Voting Rights. Thank you!

SB 798 & 799