

HB 4

HD2,SD1

Personal Testimony

Presented Before the Senate
Committee on Ways and Means

March 30, 2011
9:30 p.m. Conference Room 211

By

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and
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Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission

HB 4, HD2, SD1: Relating to the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

Chair Ige, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

I am providing personal testimony today in support of HB 4, HD2 to make permanent Hawaii's membership in the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.

The mobile military lifestyle creates special challenges for the children of military members, who attend on average 6 to 9 different school systems from kindergarten to twelfth grade. In addition, the children often endure the anxiety of being separated from a parent deployed and in harm's way. This Interstate Compact was designed to help overcome educational transition issues of children of military families and to help ease the strain on families due to deployment. Presently, 35 states including Hawaii are members of the compact.

Although Hawaii public schools have for many years prior to the development of this compact made the accommodations called for in the current compact rules, by Hawaii being a member state, our schools can expect full cooperation and assistance from the schools in other compact states who send students to and receive students from Hawaii. This eases the burden on our schools when resolving issues of graduation, enrollment, placement, and attendance for military dependent students and ensures smoother transitions for military children.

Prior to the initial passage of the compact law in Hawaii in 2009, a series of meetings with various stakeholders revealed that nearly all of the compact rules were supported by policy statements and/or practice in our schools where military students attend. In addition, it was generally agreed that the accommodations were reasonable ones to be made for all

transitioning students and did not generally create special privileges for military students. The directed accommodations are to be “reasonable” and at the discretion of school officials; they address transition issues and are not intended to impact curriculum or local standards. The compact does address special consideration due to a parent’s deployment to “a combat zone or combat support posting,” a situation unique to military families.

During the last 18 months, the implementation of the compact in Hawaii has been, by all measures, very successful. A large percentage of the state’s public school principals have received training; training has begun with school registrars; the state council has been formed with very active and inclusive military, government, and HODOE representation; and the several council meetings held thus far have been very constructive forums for problem solving and sharing of situations and issue resolutions. We have established a state council structure that is working very well for Hawaii’s unique situation. The military services’ school liaison officers (SLOs) have been actively engaged in the education efforts and have worked closely with the state council as well as the schools.

We would like to ensure that the state council continues to have the kind of visibility and effectiveness it has had thus far, so as the state commissioner I support the following actions in concert with the legislation to make Hawaii’s membership in the interstate compact permanent.

- First, as the state commissioner I support the inclusion of the amendments previously recommended by Rick Masters, the legal counsel for the national commission, in his testimony for the bill, so that Hawaii’s rules conform to the wording of the nationally approved rules.
- Second, I support maintenance of the word “uniformed” in the portion of the state law (page 46) that describes the military representation on the state council such that it reads in part, “One uniformed military representative from a military installation of each branch of service” My support for having uniformed officers represent the military on this council is meant in no way to belittle the enormous value to the military and to the defense of our nation of the DoD civilian workforce. They are invaluable, but in this case, for Hawaii’s particular situation, I support a uniformed presence. The national model legislation is very brief in the section on state councils and leaves its composition up to the state beyond a bare minimum of identified members. The relevant section begins,
Each member state, through the creation of a state council or use of an existing body or board, shall provide for the coordination among its agencies of government, appropriate education agencies, and military installations concerning the state’s participation in, and compliance with, this compact and interstate commission activities.

Because of Hawaii’s unique position of having a single statewide school district and a concentration in close proximity of organizations of all of the military services and the US Coast Guard, Hawaii’s council has as members the top leadership in education in the state, including this past year the deputy superintendent of schools, four complex area superintendents, a state senator and a state representative from the respective legislative committees on education, and the governor. When changes were needed in the schools

based on discussions in the council, there were the people in the room who got it done immediately. This kind of responsiveness was due also to the military representation on the council this year: there were high-ranking uniformed members (most at the colonel level, one two-star general) from all but one of the services. Most had school-age children. It is the military children, not children of civilian workers, who are affected by the compact, and when these uniformed members brought problems to the table, it was with firsthand knowledge and with an urgency that could not be ignored. When the uniformed members spoke, the council listened, as did those in the audience at the several council meetings. This was the best kind of representation on the council that military families could ask for. Also, because education of military dependents in Hawaii public schools is such a high priority in the military community here and has high visibility within the national military hierarchy, it is very important that the military leadership have direct communication with the education leadership in the state. Hawaii's military dependent children make up 8% of our public school enrollment; they deserve to have identifiably military representation who understand their issues firsthand.

As the Hawaii State Commissioner to the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission, I urge your support for the continued participation by Hawaii in the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**Senator David Ige, Senate Ways and Means Committee
March 30, 2011**

**Testimony of
Laurie Crehan, Ed.D.
Quality of Life Regional Liaison
Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Military Community & Family
Policy
DoD-State Liaison Office**

**Support of: HB 4 INTERSTATE COMPACT ON EDUCATIONAL
OPPORTUNITY FOR MILITARY CHILDREN**

The Department of Defense State Liaison Office operates under the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, and the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Military Community and Family Policy. Our mission is to be a resource to state policymakers as they work to address quality of life issues of military families. In her position as state liaison, Dr. Crehan monitors quality of life issues for military families in HI, CA, AZ, and NV. Before coming to work in the State Liaison Office, she worked as an educator, spending over 20 years in the Department of Defense Dependents Schools as a teacher and administrator. In that capacity, she learned first hand of the educational challenges the children of our military members face as they encounter frequent school moves.

Testimony

Chair Ige and Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, on behalf of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today as Hawaii considers making the *Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children* permanent.

The Interstate Compact addresses challenges military children face as they move from state to state. These challenges are of utmost importance to military families, and are consistently listed as among their top family concerns as they work to serve our nation in the Armed Forces.

Thirty-five states have already adopted the Compact. Hawaii is one of those states and the Commissioner of the Hawaii State Council, Dr. Kathleen Berg, has taken a leadership role in the National Compact Commission, serving as the Commission Vice-Chair and providing materials for training school officials on the Compact. Representative Mark Takai serves as an ex-officio member of the Compact Commission representing the Military Legislators Association. The Hawaii State

Council has been very active and serves as a model for other states that are just forming their State Council. It would be a great benefit to the National Compact Commission for Hawaii to continue to serve as a strong resource by remaining a member.

On average, most military children will move at least twice during their high school years, and most will attend six to nine different school systems between kindergarten and 12th grade. These frequent moves result in some educational obstacles. Though many states, including Hawaii, have made progress in addressing these educational concerns, there is a lack of consistency *between* states that continues to create difficulties for our military families. Some of these recurring issues include kindergarten start age, participation in extracurricular activities, immunizations, timely transfer of records, placement in appropriate courses, missed or redundant entrance and exit testing, support for children of deployed service members, and on-time graduation. Though one state may do several things right, the next move to another state can create a new set of problems since the procedures are not the same. These issues are addressed in the *Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children*.

The Compact is an agreement among member states to a set of practices that will allow for the uniform treatment of military children transferring between school districts and between states. The Interstate Compact does not ask for special privileges for military children; only that states create a level playing field, and work cooperatively to make it happen. Military children often end up making sacrifices because their parent's are serving our country. The language and intent of the Compact will provide consistency for our military children as they move from state to state and alleviate some of the hardship they encounter.

I would also like to suggest one change in language to SB 813. In ARTICLE XIII, when outlining membership on the State Council, the current Compact statute states there will be a representative from PACOM and from an installation for each Service. The new proposed language adds uniformed to the description of the representative. Since most of the people in the military who work closely with the education of military children are civilian employees, the Compact, as drafted, and as adopted by the other 34 member-states, does not restrict military-related representation on the State Councils to only uniformed military members. This is because such a requirement could result in exclusion of a person, though civilian, who may be the most qualified individual to serve.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony and look forward to Hawaii's leadership in adopting this vital compact supporting our military children by remaining

a member of the Interstate Compact Commission. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any concerns or questions.

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