

HB 688

Thank you for allowing me to testify in strong support of HB688, the Safe Schools Act. I work for the Department of Health, but am testifying as a private citizen today.

I am a member of DOE's Safe Schools Community Advisory Committee that worked for two years from 2005 – 2007 to develop the document *Recommendations for Addressing Harassment in Hawaii's Public Schools* that was presented to the BOE in 2007. I was appointed by the Director of Health to represent the Department of Health on this Committee.

I am appreciative that DOE and BOE accepted the recommendations in this document, adopted BOE Policy 4211, and updated Chapter 19.

However, in order to ensure that all Hawaii youth in our public schools have access to a safe and supportive environment, it is now necessary to pass HB 688.

The intent and language of the Safe Schools Act reflects the BOE's policies and administrative rules and the DOEs current intentions. The definitions for bullying, cyber-bullying and harassment in this bill are almost identical to those found in Chapter 19. The recommendations of the DOE's Safe Schools Community Advisory Committee are reflected throughout the maintenance and enforcement section of the Safe Schools Act.

According to the US Department of Health and Human Services' website. Hawaii is one of only 6 states that does not have anti-bullying legislation. According to the most recent U.S. CDC-funded survey, 51% of Hawaii's public high school students and 63% of middle school students "strongly agree or agree that harassment and bullying by other students is a problem at their school."

For the reasons stated above, I urge this Committee to pass the Safe Schools Act, HB688, as it is written.

Thank you for your consideration.


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