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The Twenty-Sixth Legislature, State of Hawaii
The Senate
Committee on Education
Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association
March 23, 2011

LATE

H.B. 945, H.D. 2 S.D. 1 – RELATING TO EDUCATION

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO supports the intent of H.B. 945, H.D.2.S.D.1.

As written, this bill will allow the department time to work with the exclusive representatives pursuant to chapter 89 in the efforts to implement the required school days and student instructional hours described in this bill.

We appreciate the opportunity to present our testimony on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Leiomalama Desha
Executive Assistant

LATE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THE TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2011

Attn: Committee on Education
Senator Tokuda, Chair
Senator Kidani, Vice Chair

Re: HB945 SD1 Relating to Education

Date: Hearing Date March 23, 2011 1:15pm

From: Melanie Bailey

Testimony in Opposition with Amendments

Chair Tokuda, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Committee,

Last year when student furloughs were announced, we were all in shock, including Senate and House legislators. As a parent, I did not know who to look to, and so I began to call the Capitol. I quickly found out our elected officials were not involved in furlough decision. Also, I discovered that Hawaii was the only State that did not have legislation regarding minimal instructional time and that is where my advocacy began.

We were happy when a solution was found to furloughs, but when Act 167 was passed, we not only ensured our children would not be furloughed again, but that the amount of time they were in school would be in line with schools on the mainland and consistent across our state. We cannot go backwards or put this off. The law should apply to all schools, particularly the instructional time. Multi-track schools should only be given an exemption for the total number of days.

During last year's session, there was much concern about the ability of schools to implement the new law and the potential costs. The 180 days was easily achievable but the minimum instructional time raised concerns. We knew we would not have additional money this year during negotiation, so the hours recommended were made very carefully to follow the working conditions of the HSTA contract: 7 hour work days, 40 minutes of planning time, 30 minutes of non-duty lunch, 15 minute break, 40 min/wk of collaboration. Information was provided to demonstrate that it can be accomplished with the 915/990 hours in the law. Most elementary schools already meet or nearly meet the minimum 915 hours. Many secondary schools meet or nearly meet the 990 minimum. It can be done.

If schools are now voicing concerns that the law cannot be implemented without additional costs, it would be important to know specifically what those costs are and how much it would be. It would also be important to know how many schools are struggling with implementing the law. Rather than provide exemptions or delay implementation, let's get the data. If they can't meet the law, how many hours of instruction a year can our children expect to receive at that school? If they anticipate costs what are they and how much? How many schools are in this situation? The DOE has had

almost a year to look at this issue, they should have answers to all of these questions. Last week we celebrated Government Transparency Week and we should know how much instruction time our children are receiving and what challenges they face in implementing the law.

We suggest the following:

1. Keep the law as is, and require schools to seek a waiver if they cannot comply. If cost is the issue they can share that information with their SCC, faculty and the BOE through the waiver process. It is better to acknowledge those schools that are meeting the law, and work with those that are having difficulty, rather than delay the law for all.
2. Require that all schools post the total annual student instruction time on their school website along with the bell schedules. This supports the DOE commitment to transparency and allows everyone to know how much instructional time the students receive.
3. Exempt Multi-track schools from the 180 days with a no more than 5% reduction in student days or 171 days, but no reduction in instructional time.
4. Have the DOE prepare a report to the legislature prior to the 2012 session on the implementation plan for the subsequent phases and report which schools sought waivers for a reduction in instructional hours for the 2011-12 year.

This is a complicated issue, but lets' not say we cannot do it. We do not want to go back to the time when the budget was addressed by reducing instructional time. If education is a priority, than make it so.