

LATE TESTIMONY

April 1, 2011

Attention:

House Committee on Health
Rep. Ryan Yamane, Chair
Rep. Dee Morikawa, Vice Chair

Testimony submitted by:

Linda Elento

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HCR266 (HR228) RECOGNIZING OCTOBER AS
DOWN SYNDROME EDUCATION AWARENESS MONTH IN HAWAII**

I request the House Committee on Health recommend passage of HCR266 (HR228):
RECOGNIZING OCTOBER AS DOWN SYNDROME EDUCATION AWARENESS MONTH
IN HAWAII to appreciate and to teach our communities, families, educators and policymakers
about individuals with Down syndrome and their lifelong learning needs and abilities.

All children with Down syndrome have a right to education and to be given the best
opportunities for success, requiring --

1. access to the general curriculum as afforded by the Individuals with Disabilities
Education Improvement Act of 2004;
2. the knowledge of the unique learning profiles, strengths and challenges of individuals
with Down syndrome, developmental patterns and intervention strategies, such as the
benefits of inclusion, planning ahead, learning in the classroom, learning math,
developing literacy and language, friendships and supporting behavior, encouraging
independence;
3. the removal of barriers, such as teaching special education in categories such as mild,
moderate, or severe, and that sign language instruction and usage is addressed plainly in
laws only for individuals who are deaf or have severe hearing loss;
4. addressing common anatomical and physiological differences such as mild to moderate
hearing loss, ear infections, vision problems and sensitivity to touch, a small oral cavity
and low muscle tone affecting speech development and motor abilities, verbal short-term
memory challenges, speech intelligibility leading to challenging behaviors and a need to
focus on speech sounds vs. functional communication only to get by in social situations
and to work and encouraging a visual approach to learning speech and language.
5. to translate knowledge from research to policy and service delivery.

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Individuals with Down syndrome desire to be understood. Teaching in math and reading should not be limited due to an individual's slower rate of learning. Young adults are able to continue learning to read when given the opportunities to do so.

This requires a long-term intervention, planning and awareness for parents, caregivers and educators of children with Down syndrome and all community members and policymakers.

For further information on research and practice, I recommend the Down Syndrome Education International website: www.dseinternational.org. Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony in support of HCR266 (HR228).

Additional references and comments:

Autism seems to have gotten most of the attention in Hawaii's special education system in recent years, including the Department of Education's specific autism budget, projects and many autism-related personnel, as well as legislative appropriations for autism.

While the following resolutions were adopted by our State Legislature in recent years in support of the unique developmental and educational needs of children with Down syndrome, I have not found a Down syndrome specific educator or consultant within the DOE and I still meet other children with Down syndrome with no access to inclusion in a meaningful and participatory way or appropriate communication and language development in addition to speech, such as sign language or an assistive software Proloquo2Go (a demo is found on all iPad display models in Apple Stores across the nation) in a timely manner.

Noting the benefit of sign language instruction with speech regardless of a child's hearing ability or impairment, our Representatives adopted HR231 (2006) requesting that sign language instruction be coordinated among the Department of Education, University of Hawaii and the Department of Health. The following year SCR17 (2007) urged the DOE to study the educational implications of the special needs of preschool age children with developmental disabilities. And, last year, SCR195 (2010) another concurrent resolution urged the DOE to incorporate sign language and other communication strategies during instruction to enhance the learning of children with cognitive and other disabilities.

Submitted by: Linda Elento
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