

Senate Comm. on Education
Hearing: Mon., Mar. 18, 2011
1:45 p.m., Conf. Room 225
HB338 HD2

From: Maralyn Kurshals
Leeward Board of Education Representative
Community Member of Wai`anae Coast

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB388 HD2

Chair Tokuda, Vice-Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee on Education:

I support HB338 HD2 with a suggested amendment to allow for the Hawaii State Student Council to vote for their student representative and not be appointed by the Governor.

I currently serve as the Board of Education Leeward representative. I have been an advocate for people with disabilities, single parents, and the homeless and served on numerous advisory boards and nonprofit boards. On all of these boards there have been “consumers” or representatives with equal rights and privileges as other members. In fact, on many boards, non- consumers have limited authority which is the opposite of what has historically occurred with the Board of Education where students have not been allowed to vote.

The new appointed Board of Education will have one student member. However, unfortunately in the bill recently signed by the Governor, once again that student will not have the right to vote.

This injustice needs to be corrected. HB338HD2 can be an amendment to the current bill and will allow the student representative to vote, exclusive of personnel matters.

Students are the **consumers of education**; it is only right and just that they have the right to vote on the policies and decisions that will affect their daily lives and the lives of their peers. During my time on the Board of Education, I have been continually impressed by the students throughout Hawai`i. They are articulate, intelligent, conscientious and dedicated young people. They know what is working in their schools and what needs to change. These young people are leaders and need to be fully entrusted with shaping their own futures. We can no longer dictate to them, but must realize the young people of Hawaii deserve to be contributing members of their own school environment. We, adults have too long asserted our sole view of what is good for kids, it is time we truly listened to how they are experiencing their world. Mutual respect is the key to developing leaders of integrity. The student representative on the Board of Education must have the right to vote and needs to be elected by their peers.

Thank you for this opportunity.