



**STATE OF HAWAII  
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

P. O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

House Comm. on Education  
Hearing: Wed., Feb. 9, 2011  
2:05 p.m., Conference Room 309

Testimony in OPPOSITION to HB703  
Relating to SCHOOL REGISTRATION FEES

Chair Takumi, Vice-Chair Belatti and Members of the Committee on Education:

Thank you for allowing me to testify in my capacity as a member of the Hawaii State Board of Education (BOE); I testify in opposition to of HB703.

While I appreciate the intent of this bill to increase funding for public schools, I am opposed to charging families for mandatory public education. Our public education system benefits everyone, not just those students, and families who have children enrolled in public school. For example, wealthy business owners who profit from the work of their employees benefit by having an educated work force.

According to the US Census Bureau, Hawaii households that earn up to \$60,000 a year pay the largest percentage of their annual incomes to the government offices in our state. This takes into consideration all fees paid to local, county, and state government offices in terms of fees, surcharges and taxes, including but not limited to driver's license, car registration, property tax to name a few.

Before we continue to increase the disparity of the "tax rate" on middle-income families via public education fees, please consider pursuing legislation that tax wealthy households at the same rate as our lowest income households. Lets start there, and then determine if we really need to collect additional fees from low-income and middle-income households that do not qualify for free lunch.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kim Coco Iwamoto, Esq.  
State of Hawaii Board of Education Member, Oahu-at-Large



HAWAI'I EDUCATIONAL POLICY CENTER  
*Informing the Education Community*

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Testimony Presented before the  
House Committee on Education

February 9, 2011, 2:05 pm, Room 309

by  
Donald B. Young, Director  
Hawai'i Educational Policy Center

**HB 703: Relating to School Registration Fees**

Chair Takumi, Vice Chair Au Belatti, and members of the House Committee on Education.

My name is Donald Young. I am providing testimony as Director of the Hawai'i Educational Policy Center (HEPC) in opposition to this bill.

HB 703 would require an annual \$25 registration fee from each public school or public charter school student, except for those who qualify for free school lunches or home schooled students, unless the home schooled student participates in any activities with a public/charter school.

This bill is highly problematic on its face and seems contrary to the very concept of free public education, which is such an integral part of both Hawaiian and American culture.

If education is to be compulsory, it must be free. Our country was founded on this principle. To propose otherwise is to strike at some of the most central notions of the relationship between education, democracy, individual development, and social comity noted by philosophers from Thomas Jefferson to Horace Mann to John Dewey.

Charging fees for public school registration amounts to a new tax on parents. And once such a fee was established, what would prevent policy makers from increasing the fee to (in effect) charge tuition, similar to the model for higher education?

Hawaii has a long and venerable tradition of significant public employment, strong public unions, and mass public education. Much of the foundation for this early and widespread success can be traced to the establishment of Lahainaluna in 1831, the oldest preparatory school west of the Mississippi. As is the case today, this institution did not charge tuition.

The House Committee on Education would also do well to note that free public education is not merely a proud local or American tradition. In fact, it is a central part of major international treaties to which America is a signatory.

As Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights notes: "everyone has the right to

education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages.”

Furthermore, Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights states a similar sentiment: “the state parties to the present covenant recognize the right of everyone to education...Primary education shall be compulsory and available free to all.”

Public education is, in many ways, a covenant between ourselves and the future. Let us not break that covenant.

We respectfully urge the committee to vote to hold this measure or to defer it indefinitely.