

## LATE TESTIMONY

### IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 952 RELATING TO PUBLIC SCHOOL LANDS

Committee on Education

Date: February 7, 2011 Time: 2:00 p.m.

I fully support the formation of a new land trust for the management of public school lands.

At present, public school lands represent one of the largest underutilized resources in the State of Hawaii. In an era in which the DOE is forced to make agonizingly difficult decisions for the sake of several hundred thousand dollars we simply cannot allow this potential revenue to go unrealized. Although many both inside and outside the DOE recognize the untapped earnings potential throughout the system, at present there is no mechanism of optimizing this resource. A Land Trust represents just such a mechanism.

Some might say that DLNR can already address this concern. DLNR does have the authority to withdraw lands under Executive Order to DOE (how all the school lands are set aside to DOE) where the lands are abandoned or no longer needed for the intended purpose. In such cases DLNR could develop that land yet all the revenues would go to the general fund (if trust lands) or Land Division's special fund (if non-trust lands or certain kind of development). Either way, DOE would not see the monies. There needs to be statutory authority to direct revenues into a special fund.

Revenue from a dedicated Land Trust would flow on a merit-driven basis directly toward projects that most help bring our schools up to 21<sup>st</sup> century standard. This would no doubt have a positive impact on student outcomes as well as on the culture within our public schools.

Most states west of the Mississippi have such Land Trusts and the model is therefore not new but has been functioning in a number of different formats for many years.

While this will not be an easy thing to affect I believe that we can no longer ignore the potential additional revenue that could be utilized to further our collective efforts to bring Hawaii's public schools into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

**Bill Reeves**