

# SCR79

REQUESTING THE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO COLLABORATE WITH PARENT ORGANIZATIONS TO ESTABLISH, IMPLEMENT, AND MONITOR STATEWIDE POLICIES FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN HAWAII'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

## EDU

**Date:** 03/23/2012

**Committee:** Senate Education

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Kathryn S. Matayoshi, Superintendent of Education

**Title of Bill:** SCR 079 Requesting the Board of Education and Department of Education to Collaborate with Parent Organizations to Establish, Implement, and Monitor Statewide Policies for Family Engagement in Hawaii's Public Schools

**Purpose of Bill:** Requests the Board of Education and Department of Education to collaborate with parent organizations to establish, implement, and monitor statewide policies for family engagement in hawaii's public schools.

**Department's Position:**

The Department of Education (Department) supports SCR 79. Over the past year, the Department has been working with parent organizations to establish policies and practices that encourage greater family engagement with schools toward the end of increasing student achievement. The Department sees family engagement as a critical component of student support and is already working with a variety of parent groups to establish policies and practices that will increase both the schools' and families' abilities to support their children's education. These initiatives are being incorporated into the broader framework of the Department's Comprehensive Student Support System (CSSS).

This resolution will promote further collaboration and partnership with parent organizations to create policies, strategies, and practices for family engagement that support student learning and contribute to improved student outcomes. The Department values the contributions of these organizations (e.g., Hawaii State Parent Teachers Association, Hawaii Education Matters, Hui for Excellence in Education, Parents for Public Schools Hawaii, and Special Education Advisory Council) and looks forward to continuing our work with them toward the mutual goal of increasing student success.

**Hawai'i State**  
**PTSA®**  
*everychild. one voice.*

Hawaii State PTSA  
Suite 308  
765 Amana Street  
Honolulu, HI 96814

March 23, 2012

Senate Education Committee  
Senator Jill Tokuda, Chair  
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

Aloha Chair Tokuda, Vice Chair Kidani and Committee Members,

This testimony is in support of SCR79 relating to Family-School Partnerships.

I appreciate this opportunity to give testimony on behalf of the Hawai'i State Parent Teacher Student Association (Hawai'i State PTSA). The Hawai'i State PTSA is comprised of 6,000 parents, teachers, school administrators, students, and concerned community members throughout the State of Hawai'i.

As the oldest and largest child advocacy group in Hawai'i, the Hawai'i State PTSA is committed to ensuring educational equity and opportunity for every child and that school-family partnership is embedded throughout all levels of school reform. We feel that SCR79 is a move in the right direction toward implementing a comprehensive family engagement policy in Hawai'i's public schools and ask you to support this resolution.

Research has demonstrated that family engagement in education, regardless of parents' education level, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background, improves student achievement, attendance and reduces dropouts, and increases sustainability of whole school turnaround reform efforts. We cannot turn around schools or close the achievement gap without engaging families. Recent research actually identified parent and family engagement as a top necessity of successful school turnaround reform – as integral as school leadership and curriculum alignment.

The Hawai'i State PTSA looks forward to working with the legislature, the Department of Education, and the Board of Education on family-school partnership implementation and realizing the goal of ensuring that every child lives up to his or her potential.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Liz Sager  
President  
Hawaii State PTSA

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Honolulu, Hawaii 96813



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March 23, 2012

Senate Education Committee  
Senator Jill Tokuda, Chair  
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

Aloha Chair Tokuda, Vice Chair Kidani and Committee Members,

This testimony is in support of SCR79 relating to Family-School Partnerships.

The Hui for Excellence in Education (HE'E) is a diverse coalition of over 30 parent and community organizations dedicated to improving student achievement by increasing family and community engagement and partnerships in our schools. Our member list is attached.

Last session the legislature passed SCR145, which requested that the DOE, with input from community organizations, review and develop a family engagement policy. HE'E along with other organizations worked with the DOE staff to review and comment on the existing policy and develop recommendations to improve family-school partnerships. Those recommendations were provided to the legislature in a report dated January 2012.

We strongly support this resolution as it keeps the process moving along through implementation. The recommendations found in the report provided to the legislature and detailed in SCR79 have great potential. We want to continue to work with the DOE staff as they move forward.

This effort is quite timely as the BOE/DOE has just embarked on a both a Strategic Planning and a Strategic Communication planning effort. Several recommendations in the report include policy alignment at the Board level, measureable indicators of engagement, and a robust two-way communication system between families and schools/DOE. The resolution would strengthen the effort to include these measures in those strategic documents and plans.

HE'E is committed to seeing that these recommendations move forward and will work closely with the DOE to assist them. We feel we can be helpful in assisting the DOE in identifying schools and complexes that are effectively using family-school partnerships and sharing those methods with other schools. Our department does not currently collect information about these successful activities and developing a list of schools and their "best practices" would be beneficial to all schools. Often schools operate in a vacuum and have to figure out methods on their own. Sharing information would be an excellent outcome of this effort.

Finally, we are very excited about the recommendation to do more to align policies at the complex level. This makes great sense to us. As families and students move from elementary, to middle, and then high school, continuity in policy, procedures and language will greatly enhance those transition points and create a sense of unity and cohesion within a complex.

It is our hope that these recommendations will ultimately lead to improved student achievement as families and schools are aligned and working together as effectively as possible.

We would be glad to work with the legislature, department and the BOE to make this effort successful.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your consideration.

Our support of this bill represents a 75% consensus or more of our membership.

Sincerely,

Cheri Nakamura  
HE'E Coalition Director



Academy 21  
After-School All-Stars Hawaii  
\*Castle Complex Community Council  
Center for Civic Education  
\*DOE Windward District  
\*Faith Action for Community Equity  
Fresh Leadership LLC  
Girl Scouts Hawaii  
\*Good Beginnings Alliance  
Harold K.L. Castle Foundation  
Hawai'i Athletic League of Scholars  
\*Hawai'i Charter School Network  
\*Hawai'i Education Matters  
\*Hawai'i Nutrition and Physical Activity Coalition  
Hawai'i State Student Council  
Hawai'i State Teachers Association  
Hawai'i P-20  
Hawai'i 3Rs  
It's All About Kids  
\*INPEACE  
Joint Venture Education Forum  
Kamehameha Schools  
\*Kanu Hawai'i  
Kupu A'e  
\*Leaders for the Next Generation  
McREL's Pacific Center for Changing the Odds  
\*Our Public School  
\*Pacific Resources for Education and Learning  
\*Parents and Children Together  
\*Parents for Public Schools Hawai'i  
Punahou School PUEO Program  
The Learning Coalition  
US PACOM  
University of Hawai'i College of Education  
Voting Members (\*)



**S E A C**  
**Special Education Advisory Council**  
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March 23, 2012

**Special Education  
Advisory Council**

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Ms. Barbara Pretty, Acting  
*Vice Chair*

Ms. Brendelyn Ancheta  
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Mr. Duane Yee  
Ms. Carol Young

Jan Tateishi, Staff  
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Senator Jill Tokuda, Chair  
Senate Committee on Education  
State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: SCR 79 - REQUESTING THE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO COLLABORATE WITH PARENT ORGANIZATIONS TO ESTABLISH, IMPLEMENT, AND MONITOR STATEWIDE POLICIES FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN HAWAII'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Dear Chair Tokuda and Committee Members,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC), Hawaii's State Advisory Panel under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), **strongly supports** SCR 79 which builds on the policy recommendations resulting from SCR 145 (2011 Regular Session). SEAC was involved in providing input on these recommendations.

Additionally, at the Department's request, SEAC also convened a Comprehensive Student Support System (CSSS) Family Advisory Committee to offer the most recent thinking and evidence-based practices regarding family engagement for inclusion in the redesign of CSSS--a Race to the Top project. We drafted a definition of family-school partnerships (a more proactive term than family engagement), along with standards, goals and examples for implementation. These standards, which were adapted from the PTA's **National Standards for Family-School Partnerships**, have been included in statutory language in all but a handful of states, and SEAC is in favor of having them added to Hawaii statutes.

The CSSS Family Advisory Committee, which includes a broad representation from parent groups, also developed barriers and benefits of family-school partnerships to heighten awareness and buy-in by key stakeholders. Copies of these documents are attached to this testimony.



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March 23, 2012  
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It is SEAC's understanding that these same documents have been included under family involvement improvement activities in the SY10-11 Annual Performance Report submitted to the Office of Special Education Programs. To date we have not seen the final report, which was sent to Washington, D.C. in February 2012.

SEAC would like to request that we, along with members of the CSSS Family Advisory Committee be included in any activities resulting from this resolution. We look forward to participating in the process of improving family-school partnerships along with other stakeholders. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this issue. If you have any questions, I will be happy to answer them.

Respectfully,

Ivalee Sinclair, Chair



## **Draft Definition of Family-School Partnerships**

“A positive engaged relationship based on partnerships, shared accountability, goals/priorities, responsibilities and contributions”

## **Draft Standards for Family-School Partnerships**

(adapted from PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships)

**Standard 1:** Welcoming all families into the school community—Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

**Standard 2:** Communicating effectively—Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

**Standard 3:** Supporting student success—Families and school staff consistently work together to support students' learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

**Standard 4:** Speaking up for every child—Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

**Standard 5:** Sharing power—Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

**Standard 6:** Partnering with community—Families and school staff partner with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

## Draft Standards for Family-School Partnerships

### Goals, Indicators and Examples

(Adapted from PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships Assessment Guide)

Standard 1: Welcoming all families into the school community—Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

#### **Goal 1: Creating a welcoming climate**

**When families walk into the building, do they feel school is inviting and is a place where they belong?**

Indicators: Developing personal relationships, creating a family-friendly atmosphere, providing opportunities for volunteering

Examples:

- Greeting families promptly and warmly in their home language and giving them correct information and/or connections to appropriate faculty
- Posting signs inside the main entrance that welcome families in the main languages of the community
- Establishing a help desk
- Calling or writing to families to solicit their ideas for volunteering and helping to connect them with volunteer opportunities
- Making sure there is visible and accessible parking for families
- Having a comfortable waiting/reception area with seating
- Offering family visitors water, tea or coffee

#### **Goal 2: Building a respectful, inclusive school community**

**Do the school's policies and programs reflect, respect and value the diversity of the families in the community?**

Indicators: Respecting all families, removing economical barriers to participation, ensuring accessible programming

Examples:

- Working with parent groups to ensure that classroom materials reflect the diversity of the neighborhood
- Keeping school events free or low-cost
- Providing transportation, child care and interpreters for school-based events
- Holding family activities at various times and days of the week to respect parent's work schedules

Standard 2: Communicating effectively—Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

### **Goal 1: Sharing information between school and families**

**Does the school keep all families informed about important issues and events and make it easy for families to communicate with teachers?**

Indicators: Using multiple communication paths, using language that is understandable to families, surveying families to identify issues and concerns, having access to the principal, providing information on current issues, facilitating connections among families

Examples:

- Developing multiple two-way communication tools including personal calls, emails and notes
- Developing a parent survey (translated in multiple languages) and communicated in various ways, including in person, online, in print and by phone
- Having the principal accessible to families for meeting in groups or individually at different times of the day to accommodate parent schedules
- Keeping all school families informed of developing concerns in the school community
- Parent groups and school staff jointly develop programs to help parents connect with each other

Standard 3: Supporting student success—Families and school staff consistently work together to support students' learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

### **Goal 1: Sharing information about student progress**

**Do families know and understand how well their children are succeeding in school and how well the entire school is progressing?**

Indicators: ensuring parent-teacher communication about student progress, linking student work to academic standards, using standardized test results to increase achievement, sharing school progress

Examples:

- Having teachers and guidance counselors regularly contact parents with positive news as well as concerns about their children
- Explaining to parents throughout the year what students are learning and what good work looks like under the grade level standards
- Facilitating discussions between parent groups and staff regarding needed academic improvements and strategies to support improvement

### **Goal 2: Supporting learning by engaging families**

**Are families active participants in their children's learning at home and at school?**

Indicators: Engaging families in classroom learning, developing family ability to strengthen learning at home, promoting after-school learning

Examples:

- Inviting community groups and families to school classes to share information about culture, occupation or history
- Providing workshops to parents on supporting reading or math development
- Giving families information about the importance of after school programs and where they can be found in the community

Standard 4: Speaking up for every child—Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

### **Goal 1: Understanding how the school system works**

**Do parents know how the local school and complex operate and how to raise questions or concerns about school and complex programs, policies and activities? Do they understand their rights and responsibilities under federal and state laws and policies?**

Indicators: Understanding how the school and complex operate, understanding rights and responsibilities under federal and state laws, learning about resources, resolving problems and conflicts

Examples:

- Hosting a fall orientation where families can learn about programs for academic and social growth, tour the school and meet the entire staff (interpreters are available)
- Using parent advocates to help families understand their rights and responsibilities
- Having parent groups and the school co-sponsor informational sessions on after-school and summer learning programs
- Offering conflict resolution classes to help parents, students and teachers learn effective ways to resolve conflicts at home or at school

### **Goal 2: Empowering families to support their own and other children's success in school: Are parents prepared to monitor students' progress and guide them toward their goals through high school graduation, postsecondary education, and a career?**

Indicators: Developing families' capacity to be effective advocates, planning for the future, smoothing transitions, engaging in civic advocacy for student achievement

Examples:

- Holding workshops and informational sessions to help parents learn how to ask the right questions about their child's progress in school
- Creating partnerships with colleges and local businesses to expand opportunities for career exploration and preparation

- Reaching out to new students and their families (i.e. by assigning “buddies” and parent mentors)
- Holding orientations to help prepare students for the next grade level or school
- Helping families learn about political issues affecting education

Standard 5: Sharing power—Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

**Goal 1: Strengthening the family’s voice in shared decision making**

**Are all families full partners in making decisions that affect their children at school and in the community?**

Indicators: Having a voice in all decisions that affect children, addressing equity issues, developing parent leadership

Examples:

- Hosting dialogues with families and staff about issues and policies to gain their ideas and insights
- Addressing barriers to family involvement and student success that are related to diversity in race, income and culture
- Recruiting interested families from all backgrounds and neighborhoods to volunteer, sit on committees and run for office

**Goal 2: Building families’ social and political connections**

**Do families have a strong, broad-based organization that offers regular opportunities to develop relationships and raise concerns with school leaders, public officials, and business and community leaders?**

Indicators: Connecting families to local officials, developing an effective parent involvement organization that represents all families

Examples:

- Holding a community resource fair that includes representatives from the public and private sectors to provide information about their programs
- Having parent groups reach out to families who are not involved at the school to identify interests, concerns and priorities
- Offering leadership training for parents interested in leadership roles in the school

Standard 6: Partnering with community—Families and school staff partner with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

**Goal 1: Connecting the school with community resources**

**Do parent and school leaders work closely with community organizations, businesses and institutions of higher education to strengthen the school, make**

**resources available to students, school staff and families, and build a family-friendly community?**

Indicators: Linking to community resources, organizing support from community partners, turning the school into a hub of community life, partnering with community groups to strengthen families and support school success

Examples:

- Creating a resource map of community resources and posting it on-line
- Reaching out to community organizations and businesses about offering donations and sponsoring scholarship programs
- Opening school facilities such as the library, computer lab and gym for broad community use year-round
- Working with school staff to sponsor student businesses (i.e. graphic design and printing, carpentry and light home repair) to bring student skills to the community

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**SOURCES OF PARENT GROUPS FOR FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS**

Community Children's Councils (CCCs)

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC)

Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) Parent Groups

Special Parent Information Network (SPIN)

Hawaii Families as Allies (HFAA)

Learning Disabilities Association of Hawaii (LDAH)

School Community Councils (SCCs)

Parent-School-Teacher Associations

School Booster Clubs

Local churches and community groups representing cultural/ethnic groups

## BENEFITS OF FAMILY SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

STUDENTS	FAMILY/COMMUNITY MEMBERS	SCHOOL STAFF
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Earn higher grades and test scores</li> <li>• Enroll in higher-level programs</li> <li>• Be promoted, pass their classes and earn credits</li> <li>• Attend school regularly</li> <li>• Have better social skills</li> <li>• Show improved behavior and adapt well to school and the community</li> <li>• Be more consistent in completing homework assignments</li> <li>* Graduate and go on to post-secondary education</li> <li>• Follow a career ladder for post-school employment</li> <li>• Have their culture understood and supported</li> <li>• Be less likely to drop out</li> <li>• Have higher self esteem</li> <li>• Be more likely to avoid high-risk behavior in adolescence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find greater meaning in connecting with school</li> <li>• Have a better understanding of who to work with at school</li> <li>• Know what to expect from the teacher and school staff</li> <li>• Have improved communication with their children</li> <li>• Improve parenting skills</li> <li>• Feel welcome at school</li> <li>• Develop self-confidence in ability to work in school and with children</li> <li>• Know how to support, encourage, and help student at home</li> <li>• Have an understanding of the instructional program each year, and what child is learning in each subject</li> <li>• Understand and have input into school, district and state policies that affect child's education</li> <li>• Experience shared connections with other families</li> <li>• Be more aware of resources to help them succeed.</li> <li>• Utilize available resources to achieve success.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience a rise in morale and greater job satisfaction</li> <li>• Increase communication among families, teachers and administrators</li> <li>• Have more resources available to the school</li> <li>• Receive higher evaluation ratings from parents and administrators</li> <li>• Develop the ability to engage families as partners, including families who do not volunteer at school</li> <li>• Develop awareness of family's talents and interest in school and children</li> <li>• Gain greater appreciation and use of parent network for communications</li> <li>• Increase ability to conduct two-way communications for family views of children's programs and progress</li> <li>• Design homework assignments so that they are more easily supported by families</li> <li>• Be more respectful of family time</li> <li>• Recognize the value of parent perspectives in policy development and decisions</li> <li>• View families as equal partners.</li> </ul>

## Barriers to Family-School Partnerships in Education

STUDENTS	FAMILY/COMMUNITY MEMBERS	SCHOOL STAFF
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embarrassed or ashamed of family or home conditions</li> <li>• Different culture values and perceptions</li> <li>• No family or lack of consistent family</li> <li>• Transient or continually moved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family member's uncertainty about how far they could go in making suggestions or asking questions</li> <li>• Family's worry about retribution by a teacher or principal</li> <li>• Challenges related to addressing the needs of non-English speaking families and children identified as English Language Learners (ELL)</li> <li>• Family member's own negative experiences with school</li> <li>• A parent's/family member's low sense of efficacy for helping their children succeed in school</li> <li>• Negative perceptions of the invitations, demands, and opportunities for involvement (NASP)</li> <li>• Economic and time constraints, diverse linguistic and cultural practices</li> <li>• Misunderstanding of the individual school staff's roles and expectations from them</li> <li>• Limited family resources, such as transportation and child care</li> <li>• Parent's/family member's lack of comfort at the school</li> <li>• Tension in relationships between parents//family members and teachers</li> <li>• Mobility</li> <li>• Lack of vested interest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of teacher time</li> <li>• Teacher's misperceptions of parent/family member abilities</li> <li>• Lack of understanding of parents' communication styles</li> <li>• Lack of vested interest</li> <li>• No training for school staff on how to work with families</li> <li>• Administrator's and teacher's worry that increased family involvement adds to their already busy schedules</li> <li>• Educator's worry that closer relationships with families means giving up power and decision-making</li> <li>• Extreme social and physical distance between some educators and families</li> <li>• Limited expectations of the parent's/family member's role in the educational process</li> <li>• Different values, and exclusionary or unilateral school practices and procedures</li> <li>• Diminished resources for implementing family-school programs,</li> <li>• Too little focus on the interaction process (i.e., prerequisite conditions) that yields a strong relationship as various activities are implemented (Christenson &amp; Sheridan, 2001; Liantos, 1992).</li> </ul>





COMMUNITY CHILDREN'S COUNCIL OF HAWAII  
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March 22, 2012

To: Senator Jill N. Tokuda, Chair  
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Education State Capitol

RE: SCR79 – Education; Family Engagement

Dear Chairs Tokuda & Kidani, and Members of the Committee,

The 17 Community Children's Councils (CCCs) of Hawaii **strongly urge a statute for 'Family Engagement'** be considered utilizing the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) national recommendation. Hawaii is *one of only eleven states* that do not have a statute on family engagement. This would emphasize meaningful two-way communication between teachers, parents, students, and community members by aligning and integrating school-family partnership practices across the Department of Education (DOE) System. Currently there is no consistent mechanism to accomplish this.

The DOE has the Parent Community Networking Centers (PCNC Program) to assist families at high risk. To our knowledge there is no data available to support the effectiveness of the PCNC position. In our experience, the PCNCs are not aware of the unique needs of children with special education. Additionally, the duties and responsibilities of this position are variable at the discretion of the administration. Therefore there is no state-wide consistency in the implementation of this program.

The School Community Councils (SCCs) are another mechanism to engage families. Additional responsibilities include educational decision-making, curriculum review and review of the Academic and Financial Plan. To the best of our knowledge, they engage in very little family engagement activities. There is a diverse student population that may not be reflected on the council. Furthermore, although each family can be a member of the SCC, it does not afford this opportunity for families that have an inconsistent work schedule or the inability to fully participate.

We were pleased to be included in the core work group for the DOE on the revision of the Comprehensive Student Support System (CSSS) in regards to the Family-Partnership Section. The PTA national standards (attached below) were used as a model for this and were also submitted as part of the State Performance Plan – Annual Performance Review. This aligns with the national effort of The Family Engagement in Education Act (H.R.1821/S.941) which incentivizes schools and districts to meaningfully engage families to close the achievement gap as research demonstrates that family engagement in a child's education increases student achievement, improves attendance, and reduces the dropout rate. We look forward this continued collaboration



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with the Board of Education, the Department and other stakeholders in the development of an implementation plan.

The CCCs are community-based bodies comprised of parents, professionals in both public and private agencies and other interested persons who are concerned with specialized services provided to Hawaii's students. Membership is diverse, voluntary and advisory in nature. The CCCs are in rural and urban communities organized around the Complexes in the DOE.

Should you have any questions or need additional information, please contact the Community Children's Council Office (CCCO) at 586-5363.

Thank you for considering our testimony,

Tom Smith, Co-Chair

Jessica Wong-Sumida, Co-Chair

(Original signatures are on file with the CCCO)



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### **Draft Definition of Family-School Partnerships**

“A positive engaged relationship based on partnerships, shared accountability, goals/priorities, responsibilities and contributions”

### **Draft Standards for Family-School Partnerships**

(adapted from PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships)

**Standard 1:** Welcoming all families into the school community—Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

**Standard 2:** Communicating effectively—Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

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March 22, 2012

Senate Education Committee  
Senator Jill Tokuda, Chair  
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

Aloha Chair Tokuda, Vice Chair Kidani and Committee Members,

This testimony is in support of SCR79 relating to Family-School Partnerships.

Hawaii Education Matters (HEM) is a non-profit organization driven by public school parents and families whose mission is to support excellence in public education by creating, sustaining and leveraging community energy and resources to improve student success. Developed to address the 2009 teacher furloughs, HEM is a relatively young organization. As the fervor around the furlough crisis died down, so too did the activist engagement of our parents and families. It is HEM's intention to find ways to sustain and deepen active and meaningful participation for parents and families beyond the crisis du jour.

In early 2011 the Hawaii Education Matters' Board of Directors conducted a strategic planning retreat. The concept of a Parent Academy emerged as the most logical next step for the development and growth of our organization. A Parent Academy is a series of education related workshops (either in person or on-line) that provide information and training on a variety of education related topics for families. These workshops are designed to help families and school staff become full partners in the education of all students. We are collaborating with the Kailu/Kalaheo Complex to pilot five workshops for the Parent Academy this May.

Last session the legislature passed SCR145, which requested that the DOE, with input from community organizations, review and develop a family engagement policy. HEM collaborated with HE'E to work, along with other organizations and DOE staff, to review and comment on the existing policy and develop recommendations to improve family-school partnerships. Those recommendations were provided to the legislature in a report dated January 2012.

We strongly support this resolution. The recommendations found in the report provided to the legislature and detailed in SCR79 have great potential. We want to continue to work with the DOE staff as they move forward to implement the recommendations outlined in the report. Several recommendations in the report are aligned with HEM's development of a Parent Academy as a model for parent engagement in education, they are: measureable indicators of engagement and a robust two-way communication system between families and schools/DOE.

HEM is committed to seeing these recommendations move forward and will work closely with the DOE to assist them. We feel we can be helpful in assisting the DOE in identifying schools and



complexes that are effectively using family-school partnerships and sharing those methods with other schools. Our department does not currently collect information about these successful activities and developing a list of schools and their “best practices” would be beneficial to all schools. Often schools operate in a vacuum and have to figure out methods on their own. Sharing information would be an excellent outcome of this effort.

Finally, we are very excited about the recommendation to do more to align policies at the complex level. This effort is directly in line with the work HEM is currently conducting with the Kailua/Kalaheo Complex Parent Academy. It is important to put in to place mechanisms whereby families and students can seamlessly move from elementary, to middle, and then high school. Continuity in policy, procedures and language will greatly enhance those transition points and create a sense of unity and cohesion within a complex.

It is our hope that these recommendations will ultimately lead to improved student achievement as families and schools are aligned and working together as effectively as possible.

We must find ways to encourage shared responsibility for our students’ success. If implemented and monitored effectively, SCR 79 could be the conduit for parent and family engagement becoming part of the fabric of public education in Hawaii.

We would be glad to work with the legislature, department and the BOE to make this effort successful.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ann Davis, MPH  
Executive Director