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LATE TESTIMONY

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The Twenty-Seventh Legislature, State of Hawaii  
The Senate  
Regular Session of 2013

Committee on Education

Committee on Health

Testimony by  
Hawaii Government Employees Association  
February 8, 2013

S.B. 240 – RELATING TO EDUCATION

The Hawaii Government Employees Association (HGEA), AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO, offers the following concern regarding Senate Bill 240.

This measure seeks to repeal Section 302A-708 of the Hawaii Revised Statutes which requires the Department of Education provide career pathways, development and training opportunities to all school health aides to ensure the opportunity for continued employment. The HGEA strongly discourages the repeal of any language that provides development and training opportunities for employees as we believe that all public employees should be encouraged to seek further growth in their careers and in their service to our community. The HGEA also believes that the repeal of this language could adversely affect the pool of applicants as the department fills future vacancies.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira  
Executive Director

February 10, 2013

Senator Josh Green, Chair of Committee on Health

Senator Rosalyn Baker, Vice Chair of Committee on Health

Senator Jill Tokuda, Chair of Committee on Education

Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair of Committee on Education

Regarding: SB 240, Relating to Education

Committee on Health: Hearing on February 12, 2013 at 2:00, Conference Room 229

Thank you for your time and for allowing me to submit this testimony. My name is Ruth Ota. I was an employee of the Department of Health (DOH), Public Health Nursing Branch for thirty-eight (38) years and of that was the Chief of Public Health Nursing Branch, for fifteen (15) years until my retirement in December of 2007.

My concerns and opposition to Senate Bill 240 are as follows:

1). The inclusion of item (b) to HRS, Section 302-854 to require the Department of Health, in consultation with the University of Hawaii School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene, to provide training and clinical direction to school health aides is unnecessary. The DOH and DOE have operated under a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that stipulated the roles and responsibilities of both departments related to the school health aides. One of the roles of the DOH in the Memorandum is the training and clinical oversight of the school health aides. The Public Health Nurses of the DOH have done an excellent job of providing the training to the health aides under challenging circumstances. Rather than adding this requirement into the HRS, both departments should focus on reviewing and renegotiating a MOU that would clarify training needs for the school health aides. I agree with Superintendent Matayoshi's testimony of February 8, 2013 questioning the need for consultation with the University of Hawaii School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene. Additionally, there is no budget/funds for DOH tied into Senate Bill 240 for consultation services with the University of Hawaii School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene should this occur.

2). The repeal of 302A 708, Career development opportunities is of concern. The school health aides were employees of DOH from 1970 to 2006, when the Hawaii State Legislature passed the Reinventing Education Act of 2004. This Act transferred the school health aides to the Department of Education. One of the positive features of the transfer from DOH to DOE was the provision of career pathways development and training opportunities to all school health aides in school health services and other fields within the DOE to ensure continued employment with the DOE. This was an important selling point to the school health aides back in 2004-2005 when the plan was to transfer the school health aides to

the DOE. Therefore, rather than repeal this section of the HRS, it is suggested that DOE have discussions with the school health aides and the Hawaii Government Employees Association (HGEA) about training opportunities for the school health aides. Additionally, it is suggested that the DOE clarify what their responsibilities are related to training opportunities for their employees, the school health aides.

Based on the above, I oppose Senate Bill 240. I do, however, strongly encourage the DOE and DOH to have open discussions in regard to the training of the school health aides, as had been stated in the MOU of 2006.

Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony.

Ruth K. Ota, RN, MPH

Former Chief of Public Health Nursing, DOH

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