

SB 322

Measure Title: MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO BEST BUDDIES INTERNATIONAL.
Report Title: Best Buddies Hawaii; Appropriation (\$)
Description: Appropriates funds as a grant to Best Buddies Hawaii to support its Hawaii chapters and to provide services to youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
Companion:
Package: None
Current Referral: HMS/HTH, WAM
Introducer(s): GALUTERIA, CHUN OAKLAND, Gabbard, Kahele, Ruderman, Solomon



STATE OF HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
919 ALA MOANA BOULEVARD, ROOM 113
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96814
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543
February 14, 2013

The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services
and

The Honorable Josh Green, M.D., Chair
Senate Committee on Health
Twenty-Seventh Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Senators Chun Oakland and Green, and Members of the Committees:


SUBJECT: SB 322 – MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO BEST BUDDIES
INTERNATIONAL

The State Council on Developmental Disabilities (DD) **SUPPORTS SB 322.**
The purpose of the bill is to support the efforts of Best Buddies International in Hawaii
Chapters and provide valuable services to youth with intellectual and developmental
disabilities (I/DD).

Best Buddies has been very visual and successful in the Maui community and is
expanding on Oahu as an aspiring program for individuals with I/DD. Currently, Best
Buddies International in Hawaii is the only entity in partnership with the Department of
Education to provide opportunities for individuals with I/DD to engage in one-on-one
interactions, establish long-lasting friendships, and participate in social networking with
their student peers in school. Opportunities such as these are welcomed and needed to
enable individuals with I/DD to fully participate in their community and have a life rich in
positive relationships.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of SB 322.**

Sincerely,


Waynette K.Y. Cabral, MSW
Executive Administrator


J. Curtis Tyler III
Chair

*Testimony of
Anthony K. Shriver, Founder and Chairman
Best Buddies International
February 13, 2013*

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of SB322, Making an Appropriation to Best Buddies International to fund our inclusion programs for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Hawaii.

Although I don't get to Hawaii as often as I would like, I carry with me wonderful memories of the captivating natural beauty, and the generosity of spirit and caring nature of the people of Hawaii.

I know how welcoming Hawaii is, and I know that is why Best Buddies Hawaii has flourished since it began in 2008. With the right resources, Best Buddies can continue to grow and serve every person who needs our social, recreation, and employment services.

We know that it is the development of social skills that best prepares students with intellectual disabilities for life on the job and in the community after school. Yet, without Best Buddies, most special education students never have the chance to develop those skills through interaction with their typical peers. In Hawaii, nearly 32% of students with disabilities spend more than 60% of their time in school separated from their non-disabled peers (www.ideadata.org). Hawaii's students with disabilities are separated from their non-disabled peers more than any of the other 50 states and territories with the exception of Guam.

With an appropriation from the state, we can expand to serve even more students in more schools. Specifically, state support would fund an office on Oahu that would manage Best Buddies chapters at 15 middle and high schools and involve at least 300 additional students.

Mike McCormick, our state director, has done an outstanding job leading Best Buddies in Hawaii. I am confident that, with the state as our partner, we will continue to expand our programs and our presence to create a more inclusive future for everyone.

Thank you.

Committee on Human Services
Committee on Health
Hearing on SB 322

Testimony from Michael McCormick, Best Buddies Hawaii State Director

Aloha Committee Chair Senator Chun Oakland, Vice Chair Senator Green and fellow committee members.

I'd like to thank the committee for the opportunity to speak before you today. My name is Mike McCormick and I am the State Director for Best Buddies Hawaii, LLC. Best Buddies Hawaii was established in 2008 with an office at the J.W. Cameron Center in Wailuku.

Best Buddies Hawaii is a state affiliate of Best Buddies International, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established in 1989. Our mission is to establish a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment, and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Best Buddies Hawaii serves 556 participants with and without IDD in thirteen schools in Hawaii. There are currently three intermediate school chapters and ten high school chapters in Hawaii, which positively impact the lives of over 5,560 people in the state by involving parents, siblings, and friends.

Best Buddies Hawaii is the only organization in Hawaii dedicated to providing friendship opportunities for children and adults with IDD. Our unique mission and innovative programs fill a void in the educational system for people with IDD, giving them the chance to develop social skills that aid in their employment, independence, and community integration.

We are grateful to have support from Maui County and the City and County of Honolulu, as well as a number of corporations, foundations, and individuals. We would like to partner with the state in order to serve more individuals and students in Hawaii who are in need of inclusion services.

We are asking for support from the state in the form of two Grant-in-Aids for the Best Buddies Hawaii. This funding will allow Best Buddies to open a field office on Oahu and to continue to provide valuable support to youth with IDD by matching students with IDD in one-to-one friendships with their typical peers.

In addition, we seek to bring Best Buddies Jobs to Hawaii, providing opportunities for adults with IDD to work independently in the community. Launching our employment program would enable citizens of Hawaii with IDD to be truly integrated into our workplaces. Best Buddies Jobs is unique among providers in that we only place individuals in community-based jobs

Participation in Best Buddies helps Hawaiian youth with IDD can become employed, more independent, and more included in their communities.

We thank you for your continued **support** of Best Buddies Hawaii.

In Friendship,



Michael McCormick
State Director, Best Buddies Hawaii

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [HMS Testimony](#)
Cc: Sman@lapetra.edu
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB322 on Feb 14, 2013 13:30PM
Date: Wednesday, February 13, 2013 10:46:34 AM

SB322

Submitted on: 2/13/2013

Testimony for HMS/HTH on Feb 14, 2013 13:30PM in Conference Room 016

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Sarah Man	Best Buddies Hawaii	Support	No

Comments: It is so important to the social fabric of our schools to support this bill. Inclusion is vital and we have seen great success at the school where chapters have started. Please support this bill and help promote inclusion for those with intellectual disabilities. As a parent of a child with special needs I thank you for this support.

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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Testimony for SB 322
February 14, 2013

Marc Mortimer
425 Ena Road # 702 C
Honolulu, Hawaii 96815

The Honorable Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
The Honorable Senator Josh Green, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services
Twenty Seventh Legislature
State Capital
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

SUBJECT: SB- 322-MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO BEST BUDDIES INTERNATIONAL

Dear Senators Chun Oakland and Green, and Members of the Committees:

My Name is Marc Mortimer and I **strongly support SB 322**.

I believe in the Best Buddies philosophy of providing opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) to engage in one-on-one interactions, establish long-lasting friendships, and participate in social networking. These opportunities are needed to enable individuals with I/DD to fully participate in their community and have a life rich in positive relationships.

I'm a member of the Best Buddies Oahu Advisory Board and know firsthand the importance of people with I/DD developing social skills so they do not feel segregated because of their disability. Best Buddies instead encourages the inclusion of persons with I/DD. I am a person diagnosed with both Cerebral Palsy and an Intellectual Developmental Disability since birth. I believe in the promotion of independent living and the integration of persons with disabilities into the community. I am very creative and resourceful and know in my heart that I am able and capable of offering so much to my community. This is the dream I have for the youth in our state.

Development of social skills is known to help prepare people for life, work and participation in the community. With Best Buddies, special education students have a chance to develop those skills through interaction with their typical peers and becoming examples of change in their school. We must lay the groundwork necessary for children with I/DD to have opportunities like their peers. Best Buddies and their support of inclusion is hands down is the best program to do this.

It has been a privilege for me to serve as a self-advocate and community volunteer, giving of my time to serve Best Buddies Hawaii. I look forward to the future of our youth and hope that you will support this bill. It will allow many more young people in Hawaii the opportunity to enhance their lives and create change in the lives of other students, their school and their community.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of SB322.

Mahalo for your support!
Sincerely,
Marc Mortimer



COMMUNITY CHILDREN'S COUNCIL OF HAWAII
1177 Alakea Street · B-100 · Honolulu · HI · 96813
TEL: (808) 586-5363 · TOLL FREE: 1-800-437-8641 · FAX: (808) 586-5366

February 13, 2013

Senator Oakland and Senator Green
Chairs of Human Services and Health – State Capitol

RE: SB 322

MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO BEST BUDDIES INTERNATIONAL

Dear Chairs Oakland and Green, Vice-Chair Baker, and Members of the Committee,

The Community Children's Councils (CCC's) **supports** SB 322, which proposes an appropriation for best buddies international.

Best buddies international is a program that assists people with intellectual disabilities obtain social skills and provide foster friendship. In addition to fostering socialization, it also provides job coaching, which provides the necessary tools for people with disabilities to become more independent and included in the community.

The 17 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 Department of Education.

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)

Aloha,

My name is Joby Faris and I serve as the Chapter Treasurer and next year's Chapter President for Kaimuki High School's Best Buddies club. Through Best Buddies I have traveled to Indiana University to receive training at a leadership conference. I have learned to work closely with teachers, administrators and the other students to help better the lives of students with disabilities. As a Peer Buddy at Kaimuki High School I have been matched in a one-on-one friendship with a Buddy which is a student with a disability. My buddy's name is Jacob and I'm so glad to have him in my life. Through my friendship with Jacob I've learned that although some students have disabilities they are just like any other student. Being friends with Jacob has showed me the importance of friendship and how by just saying hi to Jacob would put a smile on his face. Best Buddies has definitely changed my life because it has taught me to be a better friend not just to Jacob but to the people around me. I know that by spreading the mission of Best Buddies it will have a positive impact on the state of Hawai'i. It has been an amazing opportunity for me to have a Buddy like Jacob and be involved with this club and I can't wait for all the schools throughout the state of Hawai'i to be able to have the great opportunity I've been given.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of SB 322, appropriating funds to support Hawaii's Best Buddies Chapters and to provide services to youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

I was honored to serve as chapter president of Kapolei High School Best Buddies 2011-2012. Through working with Best Buddies my life has changed I travelled across the country to receive leadership training at a major university in Indiana, I have worked closely with teachers, administrators, and other students to better the lives of students with disabilities at my school, and most importantly I have made new friends.

Best Buddies mission is to break down barriers and integrate students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. During my term as president, I witnessed my fellow buddies with intellectual and developmental disabilities grow and transform. They no longer walked the campus as though they were isolated from the rest of the general education students. They came to school with optimism and excitement and they grew to become more confident. The power of friendship is amazing; it creates positive energy that allows one to grow socially.

We must continue to break down barriers and allow those with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities to be included into society. I know spreading Best Buddies mission of friendship across the state of Hawaii will change lives for the better because it has changed mine. It has been a blessing to have a buddy and this club in my life and I can't wait for my friends and neighbors throughout the state to have such a wonderful opportunity.

Thank you,
Ashley Ono

My name is Connie Smith and for the last three years I have served on the Best Buddies Hawaii Oahu Board of Directors in Honolulu.

I am passionate about this because I have a son, Greg, who was born with Down syndrome. Greg did not have the opportunity to reap benefits of being in a Best Buddies program. I am working hard to make sure that future children in our state have this vital opportunity.

Friendship is the greatest gift any person can experience in a lifetime. BBI is the world's largest non-profit organization that provides opportunities for one-on-one friendships; as we aim to provide these friendships to people who have been largely ignored.

For more than half a century, the Kennedy and Shriver Families have been at the forefront of national and global efforts to support people with intellectual disabilities starting with President John F. Kennedy. His sister, Eunice Kennedy Shriver, who was the founder and driving force of Special Olympics. During her lifetime Mrs. Shriver served as a board member of Best Buddies International.

Best Buddies school programs allow students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities the opportunity to have friends and it also helps the regular students to understand and get to know our wonderful children.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony.
Please **support** the passage of SB 322

Sincerely,
Connie Smith
419 Keoniana St. #804,
Honolulu, HI 96815

Elizabeth Torres
41-778 Kalaniana'ole Highway
Waimanalo, Hawaii 96795

February 12, 2013

The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services
Twenty-Sixth Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

RE: SB 322 – Making an appropriation to Best Buddies

Dear Senators Galuteria and Chun Oakland and Member of the Committee:

Aloha mai kakou, my name is Elizabeth Torres and I am the Program Manager for the Best Buddies Program on Oahu.

Thanks you for the opportunity to tell you that I am in **strong support of SB 322.**

I have been a witness to the success of the Best Buddies Friendship program since July 2012, when attending an international Best Buddies leadership conference. Being a program manager for Best Buddies Oahu, I not only helped to open up a total of 7 chapters, but I have seen little miracles happen within a short 6 months. Seeing the students in school develop friendships with their peers where once a student would be by passed in the hallway to now getting invitations to fun activities, games and even out to lunch. Having students who never had the opportunity to fly on an airplane to attend a leadership conference that looks to accepting one another no matter the shape, size, or disability. And having students represent Hawaii by inviting all talents to audition and perform in a school talent show.

Best Buddies empowers individuals to build one-to-one friendships, that provides opportunities to grow into stronger adults and be productive citizens within their community. Best Buddies is a program that needs to be in our schools throughout our state. It not only provides volunteerism, social change but it also provides awareness to the differences of others with a focus on their abilities and strengths. Bullying in Hawaii is still an extreme social issue and Best Buddies helps to show social movement towards accepting one another for who we are.

Please support this bill and the value of inclusion for all our students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mahalo nui loa,

Elizabeth Torres

Aloha Senators,

My name is Erin Hilburn, Program Manager for Best Buddies Hawaii (Maui). I want to thank you for the opportunity to write you regarding my **support** of SB 322. Before I worked with Best Buddies, I was an art teacher. In my profession I saw all the students at the school, including those with disabilities. In fact, my classroom was one of the only places where inclusion really took place. Here in Hawaii, I have noticed the same trends. Our students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) deserve more interaction with their peers than one or two electives, Best Buddies provides that and so much more.

This year I have had the pleasure of watching the profound impact that Best Buddies has on students with IDD. Having a peer buddy (student without a disability) to lend support and be a friend is an invaluable asset to the success of students with IDD. Most recently, I witnessed one of our Buddy Directors, Mary Joy Sioson, receive that support from her peer buddy, Taylor Smith, during a speech about transition. Mary Joy spoke to a group of 100 peers, many without a disability. The very first time, Taylor could not be there due to an academic conflict and the idea of speaking was so nerve racking to Mary Joy that she broke down in tears. However, once Taylor was there to provide encouragement and support, it was as if a completely different person stood at the front of the room. Mary Joy spoke proudly and confidently. She told of her post high school plans and her life goals. Taylor calmly spoke words of encouragement when she stumbled, helped her when she lost her place, and congratulated her on her success. Taylor empowered Mary Joy to be all that she could be.

That's what Best Buddies is all about, not only do the members of our chapter spread awareness in the community, include their peers with IDD in social interactions, lobby for the rights of individuals with IDD, but they also empower each and every student that is involved. It is a life changing experience for students with IDD and students without. It has certainly been a life changing experience for me. I will never look at people with disabilities in the same light. No matter where I go or what I do, my time as Program Manager of Best Buddies has impacted me forever. I will continue to be heavily involved in the disability rights movement. I urge you to consider funding the expansion of this great organization. I know that we have so many schools that long to start a Best Buddies Chapter at their campus. The community sees the impact our volunteers and our organization is having in Hawaii. It would be so beneficial if we could spread this impact to all the islands. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on behalf of this bill. I appreciate your willingness to hear the bill and ask that you please support the passage of SB 322. Help us empower our youth, both those with disabilities and those without.

Sincerely,

Erin Hilburn

Tuesday February 12th, 2013

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Josh Green, Vice Chair

RE: SB 322 - MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO BEST BUDDIES
INTERNATIONAL

Thank you for allowing me to have a voice in **support** of the wonderful foundation
"Best Buddies"

I was recently introduced to this program, and am now on the Oahu Board. During
this short period of time of approximately seven (7) months I have had the pleasure
of witnessing the amazing bond between students from different walks of life but
yet united and growing together as boundless Buddies.

Their interaction, their communication skills, their caring and commitment to each
other as they both go through their daily challenges in life is admirable.

They are an example of what we as citizens, neighbors and as a community should
strive for; Unity, Love, Compassion and understanding of each other.

This Best Buddie program encourages the healthy approach for our Buddies and our
Peer Buddies in the home, the playing field, the classroom, college, and the
workforce and within our Communities to be united; to eliminate segregation, and
to be accepting of others - unconditionally.

Seeing this is so exciting to me. It gives me hope that with this type of encouraging
program within our schools, there is hope for our youth's future. It brings out the
best in our youth. Reaching out to the need of others less fortunate. I believe it is a
win win for everyone.

An investment in this programs vision can only bring a healthy, stronger, kind,
caring and loving relationship.

Please consider SB-322. This is for our children, their future, their development.

Lets help!

Aloha



Haumea Hebenstreit Ho

Jean McGoldrick
630 Kaiaulu Loop
Makawao, HI 96768
(808) 573-7886

February 13, 2013

The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland,
Chair Senate Committee on Human Services
Twenty-Sixth Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: SB 322 – Making an appropriation to Best Buddies

Dear Senators Galuteria, Chun Oakland, and members of committee:

I am writing this testimony in **support** of SB322. My son was diagnosed with Autism at age 2. He expressed little interest in the world around him much less making friends with his peers. As parents, we've worked extremely hard with numerous therapies and programs and he has done very well. Unfortunately, none of the programs we tried were successful in bringing him out of his shell enough to understand and want friendship. We joined Best Buddies 3 years ago and it has given him confidence and he is now finally learning about what it means to make and be a friend. He now texts and sees friends through Best Buddies on a regular basis and loves every minute of it.

My son is very quick to smile and make a new friend whenever the opportunity arises. He can give speeches about how Best Buddies has helped him make friends and how it's changed his life, something I never thought he would be able to do. Best Buddies has given him this enormous opportunity to go out into the world with confidence and pride.

Best Buddies Hawaii should be given the opportunity to expand its presence on Oahu through funding. It will allow them to provide more school-based programs on both Maui and Oahu. It is my hope that this funding will launch Best Buddies employment program so my son may be given the opportunity to work in a job within our community. I truly believe he can become a hard working member of society.

I want to say thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony. Thanks to the committee for hearing SB322 and I ask them to support the passage so Best Buddies can continue to do their very important work in Hawaii.

Sincerely

Jean McGoldrick

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [HMS Testimony](#)
Cc: jtomoso@hawaii.rr.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB322 on Feb 14, 2013 13:30PM
Date: Tuesday, February 12, 2013 8:58:36 AM

SB322

Submitted on: 2/12/2013

Testimony for HMS/HTH on Feb 14, 2013 13:30PM in Conference Room 016

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
John A. H. Tomoso	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Aloha kakou, As a Social Worker and member of the Maui Disabilities Alliance, I can attest to the great and empowering work of Best Buddies here on Maui. At our 5th Annual Moving Across the Community Forum last Thursday (The Maui "Big MAC"), the panel of Best Buddies students validated how effective this peer-to-peer education program is to special education students are getting ready (and are ready) to enter the community and begin gainful employment and "productivity". I am in solid support of Best Buddies. Aloha, John A. H. Tomoso, MSW, ACSW, LSW 51 Ku'ula Street Kahului, Maui, HI 96732-2906

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From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [HMS Testimony](#)
Cc: lkakatsu@hawaii.rr.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB322 on Feb 14, 2013 13:30PM
Date: Tuesday, February 12, 2013 6:14:35 PM

SB322

Submitted on: 2/12/2013

Testimony for HMS/HTH on Feb 14, 2013 13:30PM in Conference Room 016

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Lynn Murakami-Akatsuka	Individual	Support	No

Comments: I strongly support the passage of SB 322 to support the expansion of Best Buddies Hawaii chapters that provide services to youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As a sibling of an individual with intellectual and developmental disability who is now in her late 40's, this would have been a valuable resource that would have made her more confident in her decision making and leadership potential during her middle and high school years. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

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February 14, 2013 Testimony for Best Buddies SB322

Testimony in support of SB322

I write, as a private citizen, in support of SB322 MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO BEST BUDDIES INTERNATIONAL

I have observed the Best Buddies Program on Maui as they have participated on our panels for the Maui Disability Alliance Legislative Forum and at our annual BIG MAC High School Transition Event for students with special needs.

The Best Buddy program fosters inclusion for students with special needs by giving them a peer buddy at their school. This relationship of "Buddy" benefits the student with the special needs but also equally benefits the student who is being the "Best Buddy". The practice of fully including people with special needs (full inclusion) is greatly benefitted by the BEST BUDDIES program.

I recommend the programs expansion to all the High Schools in the state of Hawaii. Best Buddies fosters community inclusion, school inclusion, friendships, compassion and understanding in our community.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB322

Sincerely,
Mary Matsukawa

Patrick McGoldrick
630 Kaiaulu Loop
Makawao, HI 96768
(808) 573-7886

February 13, 2013

The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland,
Chair Senate Committee on Human Services
Twenty-Sixth Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: SB 322 – Making an appropriation to Best Buddies

Dear Senators Galuteria, Chun Oakland, and members of committee:

My name is Patrick McGoldrick and I am 16 years old. I am a Best Buddies Ambassador for Seabury Hall chapter on Maui, and I have Autism. Thank you for the opportunity to tell you why I am in **strong support** of SB322.

Through Best Buddies I'm learning about friendship, compassion, and honesty. This bill needs to be sent because everybody in our group and around the school love this program and thus we can also get more people from others schools to join Best Buddies.

I want to say thank you to Best Buddies and to Mike McCormick for the opportunity to present my testimony.

Thank the committee for hearing the bill and ask them to support the passage so Best Buddies can get money to grow bigger.

Sincerely

Patrick McGoldrick

Testimony for Senate Bill 322

If you ask a student in middle or high school “what happened at school today?” the student will most likely think of who he talked to in the halls, in class, who he sat with at lunch, at an assembly or a sporting event. When an adult is asked to recount her high school days, she thinks of whether she felt a general sense of belonging. Did she feel noticed, involved, did people care? Most of us still have friends we made in high school. Here in Hawaii, a common introduction is “what school you went?” Many of those friends became our social support network during life’s ups and downs. The social aspects of middle and high school stay with us throughout our adult lives. These school experiences form the foundation of our adult identity.

Now please imagine two scenarios.

In the first scenario, you attend classes at a high school on Oahu, but you are not included or involved in the social aspects of the school. You have lunch in a portable classroom far away from the “hub” of the school with your teacher and one or two classmates. You’ve never met any of the kids you hear about on the school’s news announcements. You never go to the sports events. You get on the yellow bus immediately after the school bell rings and never participate in extracurricular activities. Imagine watching television shows that depict teenagers “hanging out” with friends. You think, “why isn’t my life like that?”

Now imagine eating lunch in the cafeteria with a group of with kids. Imagine having popular teens in your school say “hi” to you in the hallways. Imagine attending a school basketball game or a pizza party with some of these same teens. Imagine having contact with these new friends outside of school as well. How different your life would be. Well, this scenario is happening now at five high schools and two middle schools on Oahu thanks to Best Buddies. However, these programs are in jeopardy. Best Buddies needs financial support to keep the existing programs going. There are two full time staff members on Oahu and one of those staff members has essentially *donated* her time due to lack of funds. Other schools would like Best Buddies chapters as well, but support is needed.

Best Buddies is an international program that promotes friendships between youth with and without intellectual disabilities. Please consider Senate Bill 322 to expand the opportunities described above to other schools in our State. Senate Bill 322 requests a small investment of state funds that will provide life-changing experiences for young people in Hawaii. These friendships are a “game-changer” in promoting acceptance in our schools and our communities. Please consider being part of the change.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for any further information about the benefits of Best Buddies for youth with and without intellectual disabilities.

Dr. Rhonda Black
Professor of Special Education, University of Hawaii at Manoa
Best Buddies Advisory Board

Tammy Evrard
94-529 Poloahilani Street
Mililani, Hawaii 96789

February 11, 2013

The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services
Twenty-Sixth Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

RE: **SB 322 – Making an appropriation to Best Buddies**

Dear Senators Galuteria and Chun Oakland and Member of the Committee:

My name is Tammy Evrard and I work with and am a volunteer with the Best Buddies Program on Oahu.

Thanks you for the opportunity to tell you that I am in **strong support of SB 322.**

Best Buddies is a program that provides meaningful one-to-one friendships for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their peers. The program promotes leadership, increased personal development and job readiness opportunities.

I have been a witness to the success of Best Buddies, in other parts of the US, for over 15 years. Here in Oahu, I have seen students develop friendships with their peers where a look away is now a greeting with a name. When the excitement of a student flying on a plane to attend a leadership conference means a life has been changed. How about the tearful joy of a parent as she witnesses her child's first experience at a dance or watched as a Buddy Ambassador becomes a leader making his first speech to a room of over 150 people.

The heart of Best Buddies is the meaningful life experiences students have and take with them as they grow to become stronger, engaged and productive individuals and community members. The program fosters partnerships with dedicated professionals in our education system, our local business communities, and passionate citizens who volunteer their time to support success for our students.

Best Buddies is a program that needs to be in our schools throughout our state. It provides awareness to the differences of others with a focus on abilities and strengths. Also, the student body has an understanding and acceptance of others promoting social change on important issues such as bullying.

Please support this bill and the value of inclusion for all our students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tammy Evrard