



Written Comments

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR



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Date: 04/04/2013

Committee: Senate Ways and Means

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Kathryn S. Matayoshi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Resolution: SCR 147, SD1 / SR 107, SD1 REQUESTING THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, AS PART OF ITS DEVELOPMENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE HAWAIIAN STUDIES PROGRAM, TO CREATE A COALITION TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF DEVELOPING ASSESSMENTS REQUIRED BY THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT OF 2001 IN THE HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE FOR HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE IMMERSION STUDENTS TO MORE ACCURATELY MEASURE THEIR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT.

Purpose of Resolution: Board of Education; Hawaiian Language Immersion Program

Department's Position:

The Department of Education (Department) supports S.C.R. No. 147, S.D. 1 and S.R. No. 107, S.D. 1. We would like to request a technical change to the resolutions on page 3, lines 31 – 32 to replace “Hawaii Department of Education’s” with “the State’s”.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to present testimony in support of the Resolutions.



SCR147 SD1
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Senate Committee on Ways & Means

April 4, 2013

9:50 a.m.

Room 211

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) strongly **SUPPORTS WITH AMENDMENTS** SCR147, which complements our efforts with HB224, a bill in OHA's 2013 Legislative Package. There have been numerous problems—cultural and translation biases, translation inaccuracies, and terminology inconsistencies—reportedly found in the translated Hawai'i State Assessment for Hawaiian language immersion students. This resolution would address these issues by requesting the Board of Education (BOE) to create a coalition of key stakeholders to address the issues relating to the development of fair and appropriate assessments for Hawaiian language immersion students.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

OHA proposes to amend the portion of the resolution designating 'Aha Pūnana Leo as a member of the coalition charged with addressing the issue of developing assessments in the Hawaiian language. OHA believes 'Aha Kauleo is the more appropriate organization to represent the mana'o of the Hawaiian Language Immersion Schools in the assessment development process.

BACKGROUND

SCR147 SD1 would assist the State in furthering its **commitment to revitalize 'Ōlelo Hawai'i, the language of the first people of Hawai'i.** 'Ōlelo Hawai'i was once a thriving language used by Native Hawaiians and foreigners alike. However, by the late twentieth century, it was pushed to the brink of extinction. Fortunately, several historic initiatives, including the DOE's HLIP, have ensured that the Hawaiian language is not only preserved but also thrives. Today, the HLIP is offered at 21 public schools and educates more than 2,000 students in kindergarten through the twelfth grade.

Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, states must implement statewide assessments to measure the ability of the states and their schools to enable students to meet academic achievement standards. Currently, immersion school students in Hawai'i are offered a direct English-to-Hawaiian translated version of the test, as they are not formally introduced to the English language until the 5th grade. However, the translated tests have raised serious concerns in the immersion school and Hawaiian language community. Notable concerns include the following:

- Translated assessments are replete with technical translation errors, including grammatical errors, vocabulary errors, and inconsistent terminology;
- Translated assessments fail to consider cultural frames of reference and popular understandings, resulting in confusion and nonsensical problem statements.

These issues place immersion school students at a severe disadvantage in the state assessment process and the results inaccurately portray poor student performance. This negatively penalizes schools and their students, and substantially inhibits their underlying efforts for cultural perpetuation.

There is, however, a solution to these problems. The development of an assessment originally in the Hawaiian language for third through sixth grade students would **prevent irreparable impacts on the DOE, immersion schools, the students, and ultimately, the revitalization of the Hawaiian language.**

OHA urges the committees to **PASS** SCR147 SD1 taking into consideration our proposed amendments. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.