

**Testimony of Joseph Keawe‘aimoku Kaholokula, PhD  
Board Member, Kaho‘omiki  
To the Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
In Support of HB 2109 HD2, SD1**



March 31, 2014

To: Senators Ige and Kidani, and members of the committee:

I am a board member with Kaho‘omiki, the non-profit organizations that manages the Fun 5 physical activity and nutrition program that is now part of A+ in more than 170 elementary schools statewide. Fun 5 is the kind of nationally recognized, evidence-based physical activity and nutrition program called for in this bill and, in fact, was the model for provisions of this bill.

When considering this legislation, we ask that you look not so much at the cost and complication of making it happen, but at the huge opportunity for positively affecting the lives of some 20,000 elementary school children in this state each and every year, children who are, in essence, a captive audience waiting for something like Fun 5, waiting and hoping for something fun that can serve as a respite from the rigors of the classroom and the demands of more homework.

In the past, our program has been funded by grants from private business and foundations. But in recent years we have experienced strong sentiment that the full cost of this program needs to be included within the A+ program itself, primarily because of the very basic organizational needs which it provides to A+ – i.e., training, equipment, agendas and manuals. These are basic to the success of A+.

We support this bill for five basic reasons:

1. The program it is advocating is very cost effective – from our experience, about \$1.50 per child per month.
2. It reaches out to a vulnerable group of children, many of whom are from disadvantaged areas or families.
3. It institutionalizes within the A+ system a requirement that a program of physical activity and nutrition information be instituted on a regular and sustainable basis.
4. It insures that those who work directly with the children each day receive a minimum of training on how to work with young children, how to get children to engage in physical activities, how to present healthy nutrition information, and what to say to children that encourages everyone to participate without regard to skill level or experience – this training is paramount to the success of the program.
5. It works. We have twice done evaluative research to test the involvement of our children versus those who are not involved. And we can say with certainty that through Fun 5, obesity rates among participating children do not rise. That is, compared to the general Hawaii youth population – where obesity is continuing to rise at an alarming rate – we know that through a program like Fun 5, at the very least we can stop that progression. We also know that if we can increase the frequency of implementing the program, so that it is utilized at least 30 minutes of every school day, those obesity rates actually will go down.

Mahalo nui for your consideration of HB 2109 HD2, SD1.

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Honorable Senator David Y. Ige, Chairperson  
Honorable Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chairperson  
Tuesday, April 2, 2014  
9:20 p.m.  
Room 211



**STRONG SUPPORT HB 2109, SD1- RELATING TO AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR ELEMENTRAY SCHOOL STUDENTS**

Please vote yes to pass this bill and appropriate the necessary funds for this afterschool program.

Keeping children physically active and teaching them about healthy nutrition can help them develop into emotionally mature and functional adults, which is vital in preventing other costly interventions.

Most of my work as a health educator and restorative lawyer deals with the consequences of children who did not develop into functional adults.

To keep one juvenile locked up at the Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility (HYCF) costs almost \$200,000 a year. Most HYCF youth have serious substance abuse and social problems, and many come from families suffering the same problems.

Our community suffers astronomical costs due to the failure of promoting healthy development for our youth. We can prevent many of our current costly social problems.

Children who learn that they can experience positive feelings from activities and good nutrition can prevent them from abusing substances and engaging in other harmful behavior.

Sports and activities are well known protective factors that increase resiliency. Being in organized activities together, children learn conflict is a natural part of life and how to get along with others.

Additionally, children who learn about nutrition and to care about what they eat, makes it less likely they will choose to abuse substances.

Please see my website [www.lorennwalker.com](http://www.lorennwalker.com) for a description of my background and experience in education, social welfare, family court and the corrections systems.

Thank you for your time and efforts serving the public.