



Hawaii State Senate
Committee on Education
February 3, 2014

Chair Tokuda, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Education Committee,

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding SB2516 and SB2517. This testimony is in support allowing charter schools access to facilities funding both through the charter commission and through general obligation bonds.

I am the Founder and School Leader for SEEQS, the School for Examining Essential Questions of Sustainability. We are the state's newest public charter school; we were authorized in December 2012 and opened our doors to our founding class of more than sixty 6th and 7th graders in August 2013. While we are incredibly proud of the work our students are doing and have done thus far, the intent of my testimony is to provide a first-hand account of the desperate financial challenges of finding an appropriate facility--especially in Honolulu--that we can afford on the meager existing per-pupil funding.

As a brand new school, we began with a small founding class; this enabled us to begin our school with just a few classes, and develop our systems, processes, and school culture before we grow to a larger school, as is consistent with best practices in charter schools across the country. However, we face with a serious financial challenge. Sixty-five students multiplied by the per-pupil allocation of approximately \$6100 gives us an operating budget of just over \$400,000. With those funds, we must pay our five core teachers--as a secondary school our students need access to Science and History in addition to English Language Arts and Mathematics, plus Arts--as well as our two administrators. Our school is run by a School Leader/Principal and a School Manager. As you can estimate, paying fair salaries for our employees uses up the bulk of our revenues provided by per-pupil allocation. We also had to purchase curricular materials, technology, infrastructure, and provide professional development for our teachers. And then we must pay rent! Our current facility, in which we will barely fit by the end of our second year, costs us more than \$9,000 per month in rent and utilities.

By full size, our school will reach approximately 420 students. Accordingly, by full size we will need on the order of 25,000 to 35,000 square feet to house our facility. Commercial real estate prices ranging from \$1.35 to \$2.00 per month and up per square foot. There is no doubt--we cannot afford a facility of that size at this point, and even in the future this will stretch our budget beyond our capacity to handle.

Unless we are able to find a rent-free facility, which we have not been able to do, we will need to do significant fundraising in order to cover our facilities costs regardless of the rent price. Any fundraising we do--and any extra time we spend searching for a facility year after year--is time that we spend away from working with students.

Our school was authorized, through an incredibly rigorous process, based on our vision for a school that is based on best practices in education, as well as community need and interest. Our successes already in this first year, as well as the already high demand for next year's enrollment (more than 70 applications for sixty spots within the first two weeks of open enrollment!) are a testament to the great success our school can be as part of the Hawaii state public school system. We want to spend as much time as possible making our school successful for our students, and we believe that our primary role as a school is to focus on what's happening **inside** the school, working with teachers, students and content. Facilities support and funding from the legislature will enable us to do the work we set out to do, and that we were authorized to do.

Mahalo for your consideration.
Buffy Cushman-Patz
SEEQS Founder and School Leader

Support SB2516
Senate Committee on Education
Meeting February 3, 2014 1pm
Honolulu, Hawaii

To the members of the Senate Committee,

I am relieved that you are prepared to legislate funding for facilities for our Public Charter Schools. I support the funding of Public Charter Schools equal to regular DOE schools, to include appropriations for facilities. Shelter, food and transportation are every public school child's basic need and should be provided fairly.

Thank You, Olivia Cockcroft Parent
Hawaii Academy of Arts & Sciences Community Action Network (HAAS CAN)

Bill #SB2516

Erik MacIntyre-Lewicke, Facilities Funding For Kihei Charter School

Aloha, my name is Erik MacIntyre-Lewicke. I am in 11th grade, and I attend Kihei Charter High School. Bill SB2516 will allow increased funding for all charter schools across Hawaii. I am for this bill because if this bill were to be passed many doors will open for our school, and we will be able to accommodate many more options for our students. Our school can use the money to have a wider range of science labs, classes to teach about the wildlife of Hawaii, and a football team. Those are just the classes, this bill could also be used to maintain our facility, and we can have bigger, and healthier portions of food. Perhaps even a field, and a cafeteria. For those reasons, and many more I believe this bill (if passed) could have a huge impact on our school, and could greatly benefit all charter schools in Hawaii. Thank you for taking the time to read my message, and taking it into consideration.

-Mahalo

Erik MacIntyre-Lewicke

Aloha, my name is Jordan Jarvis and I am a Junior at Kihei Charter School. I am for the proposed bill S.B. No. 2516, "Facilities Funding for Charter Schools". I have attended Kihei Charter School since the sixth grade, and the unique learning environment has developed my creativity and ability to adapt to different circumstances. Although Kihei Charter has provided me with unique learning experiences, the lack of funds have been evident even since sixth grade. If our school received the funds proposed in bill S.B. No. 2516, our learning environment and desire for school would greatly increase. We have very limited space which results in nearly half of our students attending school only Mondays and Wednesdays, and having to take their Spanish course Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. With more funding, students will not be robbed of a real high school experience. We will be able to have our own athletics, a mascot, lockers, science labs, textbooks, and we would be able to go to school every day. I believe the passing of this bill will continue the unique learning style of Kihei Charter School, but will also provide the proper campus and resources students need in order to have a successful high school career. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Alex Bigelow, Facilities Funding For Kihei Charter School

Aloha! My name is Alex Bigelow, I am currently a junior at Kihei Charter High School. Bill #SB2516 will allow funding for our school. I am for this bill because it will allow me to have a better experience while at school. If this bill is passed, it will allow our school to have more equipment to create a better learning experience.

If this bill is passed, our school can add and improve upon:

- Transportation
- Better equipment
- Improved meals
- Classes that we are interested in
- Sport teams
- Lockers (protect belongings)
- An announcement system

Mahalo,
Alex Bigelow

Tabitha Blessum
P.O. Box 1940
Kihei, HI 96753

S.B. No. 2516 - Relating to facilities funding for Charter schools

My name is Tabitha Blessum, and I am in 11th grade at Kihei Charter School. I have been a student at KCS for the past four years and will be graduating from here next spring. Thank you for the opportunity to share how important facilities funding would be for my school. When our teacher explained what this bill is, everyone got so excited as we listed off the ways we would like to see the funding used.

One of the things I love about Kihei Charter is how they support students in becoming independent and getting us involved in the community. However, the time I do spend in class is spent in windowless, overheated rooms. When we go out for field trips, we all pile into damaged, unclean 15-passenger vans with A/C that sometimes doesn't work. The drama club struggles to build their sets on very tight budget, and our creativity can only do so much. People with after school activities have to drive all the way to town to take Spanish, because the only time it is offered here is after school. Anyone who participates in sports has to be bussed out to Maui High School to play for their teams, because we do not have any sports facilities. It is frustrating when there are only three or four after-school activities to choose from and it's a struggle to make it to sports practice because your parents don't want to pick you up from town every day. We don't have any games to get excited about, or teams to cheer for so it's hard to rouse school spirit for anything.

We get made fun of for not being a "real school." Don't get me wrong--because of my unusual schedule, I am free to learn in unconventional ways and explore opportunities in the community and I love that. It would be nice, though, to go to a school that could offer me more. This is a good school, and we need to expand. Please consider supporting our school. Thank you in advance from the Kihei Charter student body!

Sincerely,
Tabitha Blessum

Bill # SB2516
Facilities Funding for Charter School
February 3, 2014

Chase Baker
20 Hakoi Hema Place
Kihei, Hawaii 96753

My name is Chase Baker, I have been attending Kihei Charter School for 6 years. I enjoy the charter school system because of the different style of learning and the 21st Century Skills that we base our work around. The bill SN2516 is something that will greatly improve the charter school education. Right now, Kihei Charter School is paying \$1.2 million in leases every year. If this bill was to pass Kihei Charter School would be able to improve their facilities and put more money into the education. This bill don't only affect my school but it will change all the charter schools in Hawaii and start a revolution for better education.

Thank you for your valuable time and consideration.
Sincerely,
Chase Baker

LATE TESTIMONY

My name is Cloe Adams I am a junior at Kihei Charter School, I have been attending Kihei Charter School since I was a freshman. I am testifying for Facilities Funding for Charter School Bill #SB2516, I am in support of this bill. Kihei Charter School gets 1.6 million dollars of government money of this 1.2million dollars is spent of facilities. We have no library, no gym, no bus, no lockers, and no lab space. We are denied of all of the comforts that are awarded to public school students. We are not even able to go outside. We are stuck in a windowless building for eight hours, I often leave school feeling lightheaded due to lack of fresh air. If this bill is passed it will improve the lifestyle of all students who go to charter schools.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Cloe Adams

LATE TESTIMONY

I am Mason Bode, a junior at Kihei Charter High School. I am for senate bill S.B. NO. 2516. I reason I support this bill is because it would provide my school with the opportunity to improve my learning experience by increasing the amount of classes that I could take. It would also give my school the ability to have real science labs, so that I could get lab science credits for college. This bill would allow us to build our own campus along with being able to afford to get sports equipment and have our own sports team. I am for Senate bill 2516. Thank you for hearing my testimony.

Aloha, I am Dylan White. I am a senior at Kihei Charter School. I want to talk about the proposed bill which is SB2516, Facilities Funding for Charter Schools. I am for this bill.

This bill would provide funding for our schools rent. With this funding we could afford more programs. These could be more electives (foreign languages, wood/metal shop, etc.) sports facilities (track courses, football fields, basketball courts, etc.) science labs, larger campus, renewable sources of electricity and more.

I am for this bill because of the many reasons listed above. I feel like this would benefit the future classes of Kihei Charter School. Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony.

Aloha Ladies and Gentleman of the Committee,

My name is Kaleb Wilstead representing charter schools on behalf of the Facility Funding Bill. Kihei Charter has one of the highest testing scores in the state only teaching with the little funding the charter schools receive. Now imagine what could happen if we increase the funding. Better facilities provided, more teachers, and more opportunities. We have the chance to offer amazing learning experiences at a critical time in your youth's lives.

Being a student for six years at Kihei Charter, I can confidently say the school has provided me tools not just for learning but character building as well. Expressing and teaching the 21st century skills is essential now if we wish to build a healthy work force for America. This teaches students responsibility, ownership, thinking outside of the box, and to view all perspectives. This is what charter schools are accomplishing across Hawaii.

Providing the facility funding will only benefit with no negative outcomes. Not only are schools and students benefit, but also the community as well by helping house organizations like Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America, community board meetings, and government panels. I fully support this bill.

Thank you for your time,

Kaleb Wilstead

LATE TESTIMONY

Bill: # SB 2516

Name: Facilities Funding For Charter Schools

My name is Zach Kompst and I am currently a junior in high school. I have attended Kihei Charter for 4 years. I have attended public schools until 7th grade so I know and understand what facilities funding can do to a school. Kihei Charter has a lot of potential to be a top school in Hawaii. With a little help from the state we can reach our full potential as a school. Kihei Charter spends over a million dollars on the lease alone. If this bill was passed we would be able to put that money into other helpful things to better our education. We would be able to expand our learning into a variety of different subjects. Our budget is limited now and we only have 2 elective choices. If the bill was passed we would be able to have more classes that could better us for our future. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Sincerely,
Zach Kompst

Senate Bill Testimony

LATE TESTIMONY

From: [Terri York](#)
To: [EDU Testimony](#); [EDNtestimony](#)
Subject: SB2516 & HB2438
Date: Tuesday, February 04, 2014 9:13:46 AM

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing to support the bill addressing facilities funds for public charter schools.

Currently, charter schools need to pay for facilities with their per pupil allocations, which directly takes from the academic well being of the students. Charter Schools need facilities in order to have a safe place for the students to learn. I, however, believe that the funding should go to the schools each year as opposed to being held for future use.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

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Terri York

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [EDU Testimony](#)
Cc: ggzfranchini@yahoo.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB2516 on Feb 3, 2014 13:15PM
Date: Monday, February 03, 2014 5:07:07 PM

SB2516

Submitted on: 2/3/2014

Testimony for EDU on Feb 3, 2014 13:15PM in Conference Room 414

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Gina Franchini	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Please support the future success of charter schools

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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