



WRITTEN ONLY

TESTIMONY BY KALBERT K. YOUNG  
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE  
STATE OF HAWAII  
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS  
ON  
SENATE BILL NO. 2517, S.D. 1

February 27, 2014

RELATING TO CHARTER SCHOOLS

Senate Bill No. 2517, S.D. 1, authorizes the State Public Charter School Commission to request the issuance of general obligation bonds from the Director of Finance for the planning, construction, repair, and maintenance of public charter school facilities and provides an unspecified appropriation for this purpose.

The Department of Budget and Finance does not take any position on the policy of issuing general obligation bonds for this purpose. For your information, charter schools already have the ability to request capital funding as part of the budget process through the proposed charter school programs budget submittal. The availability of general obligation bonds and/or funds for capital projects is competitive across all programs of the State - including, the Department of Education, the State Library System and the University of Hawaii, and every other program in the State.

In determining the appropriateness of general obligation bonds to any charter school, the Legislature should consider the following issues related to startup charter schools: a) the issuance of long-term debt (general obligation bonds) and the site control aspects of occupancy of a property consistent with the duration of this long-term debt; b) disposition of buildings and land back to State ownership should a

public charter school discontinue its operations; c) with limited general obligation bond capacity, the policy of giving priority to charter schools over other state programs; and d) the major financial commitment of funding capital improvements for start-up public charter schools as well as the recurring repair and maintenance costs associated with these facilities.

NEIL ABERCROMBIE  
GOVERNOR



CATHERINE PAYNE  
CHAIRPERSON

STATE OF HAWAII  
**STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION**  
**(‘AHA KULA HO‘ĀMANA)**

<http://CharterCommission.Hawaii.Gov>  
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FOR: SB2517 SD1 Relating to for Charter Schools  
DATE: Thursday, February 27, 2014  
TIME: 9:00 a.m.  
COMMITTEE(S): Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
ROOM: Conference Room 211  
FROM: Tom Hutton, Executive Director  
State Public Charter School Commission

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**Testimony in support of SB2517 SD1**

Chair Ige, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Committee:

The State Public Charter School Commission is pleased to submit this testimony in strong support of this measure, which would authorize the Commission to request the issuance of general obligation bonds from the Director of Finance and to allocate the proceeds for public charter school facilities needs. The Commission expresses its appreciation to the Chair, Vice Chair, and other members of the Committee who introduced this measure.

The need to address facilities costs is arguably the single greatest unaddressed challenge for Hawaii’s chartering system. Currently, start-up charter schools must pay for the costs of their facilities from out of their already stretched operational funds.

The Commission currently is implementing a Facilities Pilot Program for the awarding of funds to charter schools for relatively small-scale facilities projects and has allocated approximately \$680,000 of federal Impact Aid funds to this program from out of a temporary but sizable increase in such funds for the current fiscal year. Funds for the pilot program are planned for distribution around the beginning of the 2014 academic year.

This initiative by the Commission has engendered considerable controversy among some of the charter schools, which are anxious about the adequacy of their operating funds, as well as concern that the precedent not be misperceived by the Legislature as a sign that the

Commission somehow can address the facilities challenge using existing resources. Despite these concerns, the Commission has seized this opportunity to move ahead with the initiative, in an attempt to demonstrate that a program of investing in charter school facilities will prove a sound investment for the public, and, importantly, to allow the system to work through any legal and practical issues before any additional state funds are invested.

This legislation is the outgrowth of discussions by an informal interagency working group convened by Education Committee Chair Tokuda after the 2013 legislative session to explore funding options for charter schools. The Commission is grateful for the contributions of WAM and other legislative members and staff, the Office of Governor, the Departments of Education and Budget and Finance, the Hawaii Charter Schools Network, and the charter schools, among others, to those discussions.

We note that this year, as in past years, the Commission also submitted on the schools' behalf capital improvement project (CIP) requests totaling some \$31 million. Eligibility for these requests is limited to start-up charter schools located on state land. We believe these projects to be meritorious, but, as in past years, they have been categorically rejected rather than considered on their merits. The Commission recognizes that there have been questions regarding CIP funding for charters and welcomes the opportunity to identify and work through those questions with the Legislature, the Department of Budget and Finance, and others.

In that regard, we particularly welcome the provisions of this legislation that (1) would create a charter school facilities funding working group, including the Director of Finance and the Chairs of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means and the House Committee on Finance, to determine criteria for and to prioritize the allocation of the bond proceeds to the schools, and (2) stipulate that public charter school facilities funded in whole or in part through the bond proceeds shall be owned by the State.

The Commission notes that another measure before this Committee, SB 2516 SD1, Relating to Facilities Funding for Charter Schools, would make a general fund appropriation for charter schools. We address this proposal in separate testimony, but to the extent that general obligation bond financing or traditional CIP funding would be unavailable for certain types of compelling charter school facilities costs, we would request that the Legislature consider these two proposals to be complementary, rather than mutually exclusive.

In addition, the Commission also believes that a third proposal for charter school facilities support that has been introduced in the House of Representatives is worthy of the Legislature's consideration. HB 2576 HD1, Relating to Education, would make an appropriation for a charter school facilities costs but also would establish an income tax credit for taxpayers who make contributions to the development of charter school facilities. That measure also would expressly authorize the use of funds for securing loans from private lending institutions for financially stable charter schools, another promising proposal.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

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**SB2517**

Submitted on: 2/25/2014

Testimony for WAM on Feb 27, 2014 09:00AM in Conference Room 211

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Tanya Abalos	Hawaii State Teachers Association	Support	Yes

Comments:

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**SB2517**

Submitted on: 2/25/2014

Testimony for WAM on Feb 27, 2014 09:00AM in Conference Room 211

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Patricia Bergin	Kanu o ka Aina NCPCS	Support	No

Comments: As an administrator for a public charter school, I wholeheartedly support this bill. It will greatly enhance learning environments for all charter students, many of whom are currently housed in substandard facilities. As a state entity, public charter schools and their tax-paying parents deserve no less from the state. More importantly, it will send a strong message to charter students that they are valued as much as the student next door at a regular public school site. No longer will they feel like second class citizens. I strongly urge you to support this bill for the sake of our future generation. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

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Thursday, February 27, 2014  
9:00 AM  
Conference Room 211

TESTIMONY TO  
THE SENATE COMMITTEE  
ON WAYS AND MEANS

**RE: SB 2517 SD1– Relating to Charter Schools**

Chair Ige, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Committee:

My name is Robert Witt, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Hawaiian Educational Council (HEC). In a partnership between HEC and the Polynesian Voyaging Society (PVS), Nainoa Thompson and I have founded the Mālama Honua Learning Center (MHLC), a public charter school committed to providing the students of Hawai'i a rigorous, values-based, and place-based education. MHLC stands to provide the community with a school dedicated to indigenous cultural values that nourish goodness; in addition to helping students develop into wise, compassionate navigators of their learning, lives and 21st century global world.

**HEC is in strong support of SB 2517 SD1**, a bill for an act which authorizes the state public charter school commission to request the issuance of general obligation bonds for charter school facilities needs.

HEC, as well as the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools (HAIS), an organization of which I am the Executive Director, believe in the public purpose of education and that families should have choices when it comes to the education of their children. Charter schools in Hawaii provide that option for our families who otherwise may not be able to find a public school that shares their educational values.

Charter schools currently receive less funding than their DOE counterparts for the education of their students and are left to their own devices to raise additional revenue to make up the difference. More importantly, charter schools must use these same operational funds to build new facilities or for the upkeep of their current ones, thereby stretching their already limited funds further.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of this measure.

Allyson H. Chambers, MD  
Kaiser Permanente Physician, Kona Clinic  
**West Hawaii Explorations Academy Parent** (WHEA) 6<sup>th</sup> grader and  
**Kona Pacific Public Charter School Parent** (KPPCS) 3<sup>rd</sup> grader

In support of: **SB2516** (funds for charter school facilities); **SB2517** (bonds for construction and maintenance of charter facilities); and **HB2576** (special fund and tax credit for donors to charters).

February 25, 2014

Dear Hawaii State Legislature,

My clinic (Kaiser Kona) is desperate to attract talented professionals, as are many businesses here on the Big Island. One of the reasons is the very poor reputation of our public school system. **The promise of paradise is not enough for young professionals looking to raise their kids here.**

**Without the two charter schools (WHEA and KPPCS) that my children attend we would not stay;** and without increased support from this legislature, the future of these schools is not assured for my youngest child who will be starting school soon.

Fixing the whole Hawaii Public School system is a worthy long term goal, but it is not one that can be realized in the near term. Strengthening the charter school system is something you can do now, and with a relatively small investment that will **act as a catalyst to change attitudes and expectations about public education**: strong, well-funded charter schools increase the chances that new, well-educated, upwardly mobile young professionals will bring their talents and their families here.

Especially on this island **we need the energy and diversity that is afforded by highly talented, highly educated émigrés from the mainland; they stimulate all of us to think beyond our shores, and open up new possibilities for all of our children.**

I love the education my kids are getting here, both in school and from the Kumu and 'Anakala who have taught them many lessons from the Island's long history: surfing, paddling, fishing, cultivation of Kalo and other native plants, respect for elders and the environment, etc., **but both of them are taking their DOE testing in tents!**

**The Big Island is an amazing place, but a fervent passion for academics is still difficult to instill in a child who grows up here.**

We are so close, but without your help we could tip backward into failure.

Sincerely,

Allyson H. Chambers, MD



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**SB2517**

Submitted on: 2/25/2014

Testimony for WAM on Feb 27, 2014 09:00AM in Conference Room 211

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Benjamin Duke	Individual	Support	No

Comments: I have been a teacher at West Hawaii Explorations Academy PCS for seven years and have seen the positive effects of giving charter schools freedom to provide a hands-on, real-world, project-based curriculum. Hopefully, my son will be attending Innovations Public Charter School starting next year. As a responsible tax payer, I cannot understand why fair funding support for my child and students isn't required by law. Please provide equitable operational funding and equitable access to capital funding and facilities for all public school children. Charter schools provide important options for families and students. WHEA is consistently among the top high schools in the state. WHEA students have to take DOE tests in tents and outdoors. Half of WHEA's Senior Class is already enrolled in college through the UH Running Start Program. Mahalo for your consideration, Benjamin Duke

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**SB2517**

Submitted on: 2/25/2014

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<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Catherine Abellera	Individual	Comments Only	No

Comments: WHEA has offered my children an excellent education experience however the construction maintenance of campus is far behind as they currently do not even have adequate facility (restroom) and use portable potty's this should be unacceptable, please support charter schools and consider appropriate monies to allow them to continue.

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**SB2517**

Submitted on: 2/25/2014

Testimony for WAM on Feb 27, 2014 09:00AM in Conference Room 211

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Curtis Muraoka	Individual	Comments Only	No

Comments: West Hawaii Explorations Academy has always operated with high levels of innovative success, first as a DOE school-within-a-school, and then from May, 2000 on, as a public charter school. During our DOE period, the school was provided about \$300,000 worth of state CIP (a portable classroom and a fence with gates). If you extrapolate those dollars out over 20 years and 2,500 students, it comes to about \$120 per student. The rest of the campus infrastructure was built by students, parents, teachers, administrators and community volunteers. We are greatly encouraged that SB2517 is being heard by your Committee on Ways and Means, and that access to CIP support is finally being discussed. While over the years, charter supporters have heard numerous reasons for excluding these types of public schools from established public funding practices, we are greatly encouraged that schools under certain circumstances may soon be able to qualify. WHEA is one example of a school on state land, in an operating state facility, with a proven track record, that has long served as a model for what is possible. This bill would provide levels of support that can finally help schools reach the next level of success and innovation.

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**SB2517**

Submitted on: 2/25/2014

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<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Fredanette Leanio	Individual	Support	No

Comments: West Hawaii Explorations Academy students have to take DOE tests in tents and outdoors.

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**SB2517**

Submitted on: 2/26/2014

Testimony for WAM on Feb 27, 2014 09:00AM in Conference Room 211

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Haroldeen Gillette	Individual	Support	No

Comments: I support facilities for charter school by supporting SB2517

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**SB2517**

Submitted on: 2/25/2014

Testimony for WAM on Feb 27, 2014 09:00AM in Conference Room 211

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Jo van Bakel	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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**SB2517**

Submitted on: 2/26/2014

Testimony for WAM on Feb 27, 2014 09:00AM in Conference Room 211

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Jonathan Kissida	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Charter schools should be offered the same funding as regular DOE schools.

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**SB2517**

Submitted on: 2/25/2014

Testimony for WAM on Feb 27, 2014 09:00AM in Conference Room 211

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Kurt Tauchert	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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**SB2517**

Submitted on: 2/25/2014

Testimony for WAM on Feb 27, 2014 09:00AM in Conference Room 211

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Liana White	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Please provide equitable operational funding and equitable access to capital funding and facilities for all public school children.

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**SB2517**

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<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Melanie Gross	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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**SB2517**

Submitted on: 2/25/2014

Testimony for WAM on Feb 27, 2014 09:00AM in Conference Room 211

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Robin Alterman	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Dear Committee Members: I support bill SB2517. As a taxpayer and parent of a WHEA Public Charter School student, I believe in equal access in acquiring general obligation bonds for the planning, construction and maintenance of Charter School Facilities. Thanks to our dedicated directors, teachers and staff, our school has given our students an excellent educational environment. However without the tremendous amount of time and energy spent securing funding to make ends meet (due in part to the lack of facility funding) our school could exceed our own very high standards. Currently we have high standardized test scores, and half of our seniors attend college level classes through the UH Running Start Program. Our students deserve the same opportunities afforded other public school students. Please support this bill and give our Charter School Students that same chance. Thank you, Robin Alterman

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**SB2517**

Submitted on: 2/25/2014

Testimony for WAM on Feb 27, 2014 09:00AM in Conference Room 211

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Scot K. Plunkett	Individual	Support	No

Comments: PLEASE TAKE THE TIME TO READ THIS IN ITS ENTIRITY I am writing to you in support of SB2517 SD1, which Authorizes the state public charter school commission to request the issuance of general obligation bonds from the director of finance and to allocate the proceeds for the design, planning, construction, repair, and maintenance of public charter school facilities. I am a middle school teacher at Kanu o ka 'Aina Public Charter School on the Island of Hawaii. I have been employed here for eight years. I currently am licensed to teach both Math and Fine Arts. I consider myself to be extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to be a member of the teaching staff at Kanu o ka 'Aina. I was hired at " Kanu" in July of 2006 in its sixth year of operation. A lot has changed at Kanu since then, and I am glad to say that it is overwhelmingly for the better. Kanu has been very fortunate to have had the financial means to build a campus of permanent structures. For years, our students were dropped off at temporary learning sights, subject to adverse weather conditions. The community of Waimea was gracious enough to provide what they could for our students, but over the years it was becoming evident that the elements were taking its toll on our students. Today, our students are able to learn in a clean and modern environment where they can be proud to show off their school to the community, but the financial burden at times can seem almost insurmountable. The programs and learning opportunities here are second to none. I have had the opportunity to experience many things, right alongside the students, that I would have never had the chance to do had I not been at Kanu. My three daughters have seen and done things that have truly enriched their academic experience. My oldest daughter, Kawaiianiani, is in her Freshman year at Notre Dame college, in Cleveland OH, on a water polo scholarship. She is a physical specimen, an all state selection, and Big Island (BIIF) player of the year, speaks fluent Hawaiian, and is already a respected leader on her college team. Although she is a actually a graduate of The Kamehameha schools, her years at Kanu played a huge part in making her into the person that she is today. Kawaiianiani learned self reliance by participating in a residential program down in Waipio Valley, working the lo'i, and collecting stream study data for the Bishop museum for three years. She learned courage and Hawaiian navigational skills by working on and sailing throughout the state on double hulled Hawaiian voyaging canoes including both the Makali'i and Hokulea. By the time she had accomplished all this, she was only 14 years old. Her application to

Kamehameha was so impressive, that her admission seemed inevitable. My second daughter was accepted to Kamehameha two years ago, and is currently in the 8th grade. My third daughter is at Kanu and is currently in the 4th grade. Like her older siblings, she truly loves her school. I am a proud 13 year graduate (K-12) of The Kamehameha Schools, and I received my BFA from San Diego State University. I became a strong, capable and confident Hawaiian because at a very young age I was given the opportunity to be part of something great. I value established western means of education, but I also believe that charter schools provide a strong academic base in addition to so much more. I admit, that academic opportunities alone do not guarantee academic success. Success is achieved through hard work and commitment from the school, the student, and the parents. The programs that we have developed over the years have played a huge part in producing strong, and proud Hawaiian students that are now being accepted to and attending colleges all across the U.S. Whether it's a Hawaiian focus charter school like Kanu, or a school that focuses on the sciences or the arts, charter schools are doing great things for our children, in our communities, and they deserve to be treated as equals. Please support this bill and help the struggling charter school system provide a clean, safe and equitable learning environment in which to grow. Sincerely, Scot K. Plunkett

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**To:** [WAM Testimony](#)  
**Cc:** [purney72@me.com](mailto:purney72@me.com)  
**Subject:** \*Submitted testimony for SB2517 on Feb 27, 2014 09:00AM\*  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 25, 2014 1:08:45 PM

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**SB2517**

Submitted on: 2/25/2014

Testimony for WAM on Feb 27, 2014 09:00AM in Conference Room 211

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
shannon tauchert	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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**To:** [WAM Testimony](#)  
**Cc:** [squieb@hawaii.rr.com](mailto:squieb@hawaii.rr.com)  
**Subject:** Submitted testimony for SB2517 on Feb 27, 2014 09:00AM  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 26, 2014 9:44:41 AM

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**SB2517**

Submitted on: 2/26/2014

Testimony for WAM on Feb 27, 2014 09:00AM in Conference Room 211

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
shellese guieb	Individual	Support	No

Comments: I support SB2517. Funding for charter school construction, maintenance and design is essential for growth of education in Hawaii. charters schools deserve facilities that can provide an optimum learning environment.

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