

# SB2797

Measure Title: RELATING TO CHARTER SCHOOLS.

Report Title: State Public Charter School Commission; Start-up Grants; Pre-opening Public Charter Schools; Appropriation (\$)

Description: Appropriates \$200,000 for start-up grants for newly approved pre-opening public charter schools, and requires the state public charter school commission to establish guidelines and criteria for the grants.

Companion:

Package: None

Current Referral: EDU, WAM

Introducer(s): DELA CRUZ

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR



CATHERINE PAYNE  
CHAIRPERSON

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

<http://CharterCommission.Hawaii.Gov>  
1111 Bishop Street, Suite 516, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813  
Tel: (808) 586-3775 Fax: (808) 586-3776

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FOR: SB 2797 Relating to Charter Schools  
DATE: Monday, February 1, 2016  
TIME: 1:15 PM  
COMMITTEE(S): Senate Committee on Education  
ROOM: Conference Room 229  
FROM: Tom Hutton, Executive Director  
State Public Charter School Commission

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### **Testimony in support of SB2797**

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

The State Public Charter School Commission appreciates the opportunity to submit this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 2797, which would appropriate \$200,000 to make start-up grants available to pre-opening charter schools that would be priority system needs identified by the Commission. We are grateful to Senator Dela Cruz for his introduction of the proposal and his interest in public charter schools as a potential part of the solution to school overcrowding.

In its current Request for Proposals for new charter schools, the Commission has particularly welcomed applications to create schools that would provide additional enrollment capacity in geographic areas where existing department of education schools are already exceeding, have already reached, or are projected to reach or exceed, full enrollment capacity; or that would serve communities where existing public schools are not performing well under state academic measures. While welcoming such proposals, the Commission has not lowered its rigorous approval bar for these applications.

The targeted availability of grants for start-up schools would add a significant incentive for these especially desirable applications and could provide important support to some newly created, pre-opening schools in their start-up year before they become fully operational and are able to draw per-pupil and other state funding. For a time before the Commission's creation start-up grants were made available to newly approved pre-opening schools. Hawaii is not currently in a position to avail itself of federal grants that have been created for this important

purpose, although that is something the Commission intends to pursue.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

**From:** [mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov)  
**To:** [EDU Testimony](#)  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** Submitted testimony for SB2797 on Feb 1, 2016 13:15PM  
**Date:** Monday, February 01, 2016 9:55:51 AM  
**Attachments:** [02.01.2016.EDU.SB2797 \(Charter Schools-Start Up Grants\).pdf](#)

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**SB2797**

Submitted on: 2/1/2016

Testimony for EDU on Feb 1, 2016 13:15PM in Conference Room 229

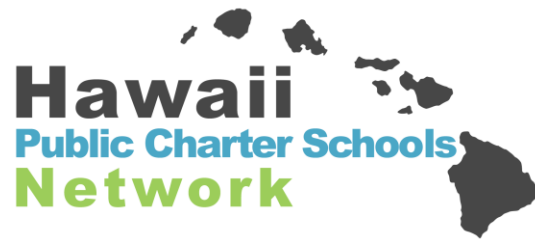
<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Jeannine Souki	Hawaii Public Charter Schools Network	Support	Yes

Comments: please see attached testimony (pdf) February 1, 2016 To: Honorable Michelle Kidani, Chair Honorable Breen Harimoto, Vice Chair Senate Committee on Education From: Jeannine Souki, Executive Director Hawaii Public Charter Schools Network Re: SB 2797 – RELATING TO CHARTER SCHOOLS – SUPPORT Conference Room 229 – Hawaii State Capitol – Feb. 1, 2016, 1:15 P.M. On behalf of the Hawaii Public Charter School Network (HPCSN), I am submitting support testimony, Relating to Charter Schools, which would authorize start up funding for newly approved public charter schools that will meet priority needs identified by the Charter School Commission and establish grant criteria and use of public funds. This initiative is a much-needed step to provide funding for start-up grants to assist new charter schools approved by the Charter School Commission. Previously, Hawaii public charter schools were eligible for state grants to assist with their significant start-up costs. Public charter schools approved after Act 130 (2012) have shared serious challenges they face with the start up of a new school. Even after three years in operation, a start-up public charter school can continue to be challenged by the “chicken-or-egg” dilemma of having to draw facilities costs from very modest per pupil funding and fund raising resources especially as they seek to grow enrollment, which helps charter schools become more sustainable. The provision of state start-up grants previously have helped several public charter schools gain firmer footing in the early years as schools become established in their respective communities. For these reasons, we urge the committee to pass SB2797 to establish much needed funding resources for Hawaii’s public charter schools. HPCSN works to support public charter schools in Hawaii and to be a voice for children and families that seek choice in an independent public school setting. Thank you for consideration of our comments. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of HPCSN.

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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[webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov)



February 1, 2016

To: Honorable Michelle Kidani, Chair  
Honorable Breen Harimoto, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Education

From: Jeannine Souki, Executive Director  
Hawaii Public Charter Schools Network

Re: **SB 2797 – RELATING TO CHARTER SCHOOLS – SUPPORT**  
**Conference Room 229 – Hawaii State Capitol – Feb. 1, 2016, 1:15 P.M.**

On behalf of the Hawaii Public Charter School Network (HPCSN), I am submitting support testimony, Relating to Charter Schools, which would authorize start up funding for newly approved public charter schools that will meet priority needs identified by the Charter School Commission and establish grant criteria and use of public funds.

This initiative is a much-needed step to provide funding for start-up grants to assist new charter schools approved by the Charter School Commission. Previously, Hawaii public charter schools were eligible for state grants to assist with their significant start-up costs. Public charter schools approved after Act 130 (2012) have shared serious challenges they face with the start up of a new school.

Even after three years in operation, a start-up public charter school can continue to be challenged by the “chicken-or-egg” dilemma of having to draw facilities costs from very modest per pupil funding and fund raising resources especially as they seek to grow enrollment, which helps charter schools become more sustainable. The provision of state start-up grants previously have helped several public charter schools gain firmer footing in the early years as schools become established in their respective communities.

For these reasons, we urge the committee to pass SB2797 to establish much needed funding resources for Hawaii’s public charter schools.

HPCSN works to support public charter schools in Hawaii and to be a voice for children and families that seek choice in an independent public school setting.

Thank you for consideration of our comments. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of HPCSN.



# KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS

Senate Committee on Education

Time: 1:15 p.m.

Date: February 1, 2016

Where: State Capitol Room 229

## TESTIMONY

By Ka'ano'i Walk

Kamehameha Schools

To: Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Harimoto and Members of the Education Committee

RE: **SB 2797 Relating to Charter Schools**

E ka Luna Ho'omalua Kidani, ka Hope Luna Ho'omalua Harimoto a me nā Lālā o ke Kōmike Ho'ona'auao o ka 'Aha Kenekoa, aloha! My name is Ka'ano'i Walk and I serve as the Senior Policy Analyst of the Community Education Division of Kamehameha Schools. Senate Bill 2797 relating to charter schools appropriates \$200,000 for start-up grants for newly approved pre-opening public charter schools and requires the state public charter school commission to establish guidelines and criteria for the grants.

As part of the second goal of Kamehameha Schools' strategic plan, which guides us to contribute to the communities' collective efforts to improve Hawai'i's education systems for Native Hawaiian learners, Kamehameha Schools is committed to support Hawaiian-focused charter schools and therefore we stand in **support** of SB 2797.

Kamehameha Schools advocates for and supports the achievement of Hawai'i's Native Hawaiian public school students. As such, we have been a collaborator with the Hawai'i public charter schools for over a decade. Through our work with Hawaiian-focused public charter schools, we hope to significantly impact more children and their families through education. We believe that Hawaiian-focused charter schools provide quality educational choices for our families and ultimately enhance both academic achievement and engagement for students. This bill is a good first step toward funding approved pre-opening public charter schools. We encourage you, the leaders of our government to stand with us in supporting a move to improve the educational system in Hawai'i in this way.

Founded in 1887, Kamehameha Schools is a statewide educational system supported by a trust endowed by Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop, whose mission is to improve the capability and well-being of Native Hawaiian learners. We believe that by continuing to engage in dialog around these charter school policies and proposals, we can contribute in a positive and meaningful way.

We believe that this bill promotes the saying, 'a'oha hana nui ke alu 'ia. No task is too large when we all work together! We commend the legislature for working hard to increase the effectiveness of our public education system. Mahalo nui.



46-063 Emepela Pl. #U101 Kaneohe, HI 96744 · (808) 679-7454 · Kris Coffield · Co-founder/Executive Director

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## TESTIMONY FOR SENATE BILL 2797, RELATING TO CHARTER SCHOOLS

Senate Committee on Education  
Hon. Michelle N. Kidani, Chair  
Hon. Breene Harimoto, Vice Chair

Monday, February 1, 2016, 1:15 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 229

Honorable Chair Kidani and committee members:

I am Kris Coffield, representing IMU Alliance, a nonpartisan political advocacy organization that currently boasts over 350 members. On behalf of our members, we offer this testimony in strong opposition to Senate Bill 2797, relating to charter schools.

We appreciate this bill's effort to ease overcrowding in Hawai'i's public schools, but strongly oppose the diversion of public funds and resources from public school classrooms to privately governed charter schools.

Last May, the state revoked the charter for Halau Lokahi Public Charter School. When the Hawaii State Public Charter School Commission (HSPCSC) combed through the school's records, they noted approximately \$100,000 in questionable expenditures, which were reported to the Attorney General's Office for investigation. Lokahi's director and two of its employees were arrested. Moreover, the school's rent payments reached \$33,000 per month, an unsustainable amount for the struggling school. To cut costs, Lokahi contracted a for-profit charter school company from the mainland to provide online curricula. This and other other savings efforts were to no avail, however, as the school eventually closed and its charter was rescinded, leaving local taxpayers potentially on the hook for hundreds of thousands of dollars in contracted debt.

While the experience of Lokahi does not represent all charter schools, it speaks to the potential pitfalls involved in privatizing public education. Originally intended to be sites of educational innovation, charter schools have instead become "school choice" models producing, at best, mixed results. According to HSPCSC, charter schools differ from traditional public schools in three ways:



- **Choice:** Charter schools give families the opportunity to **choose** the school most suitable for their children's educational well being. Teachers **choose** to create and work at schools where they directly shape the best working and learning environment for their students and themselves.
- **Accountability:** Charter schools are judged on how well they meet the academic, financial, and organizational performance expectations set forth in their charter performance contracts. Additionally, because charter schools are **schools of choice**, another measure of accountability is student enrollment—if students and their families are unhappy, they can **choose** to go elsewhere.
- **Autonomy:** While charter schools must adhere to the same federal laws and regulations and state standards as all other public schools, they have **flexibility with curriculum and direct management of energy and resources**, allowing them to be innovative.

What is clear, even from HSPCSC's description, is that charter schools are designed to advance the "school choice" agenda by providing alternatives to traditional public schools, in which curriculum and resources are managed by private governing bodies (whose members, the State Auditor has noted, sometimes violate conflict-of-interest practices by comingling nonprofit and charter school affairs). In contrast, departmental schools are offered no such flexibility and are tasked with meeting the needs of every student who walks through their classroom doors.

Thus, providing \$200,000 to charter schools to rectify overcrowding sets the precedent that public school concerns can be addressed through the expansion of school choice initiatives, in which there is evidence of financial and ethical impropriety and from which public school resources may be diluted. In our view, passing this bill is akin to supporting a school voucher program, in which school choice is emphasized over support for universal, high quality public education. To address overcrowding in our state's public school classrooms, we urge the committee to increase funding for facilities by raising the general excise tax or raising income taxes on our state's highest earners.

Passing this bill could lay the groundwork for additional efforts to privatize public education. Accordingly, and on behalf of public school students and teachers, we **strongly oppose** this bill.

Sincerely,  
Kris Coffield  
*Executive Director*  
IMUAlliance



1200 Ala Kapuna Street ♦ Honolulu, Hawaii 96819  
Tel: (808) 833-2711 ♦ Fax: (808) 839-7106 ♦ Web: www.hsta.org

**Corey Rosenlee**  
President

**Justin Hughey**  
Vice President

**Amy Perruso**  
Secretary-Treasurer

**Wilbert Holck**  
Executive Director

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
EDUCATION

RE: SB 2797 - RELATING TO CHARTER SCHOOLS.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2016

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT  
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association offers these comments, relating to charter schools.

Hawaii's public schools are besieged by overcrowding and declining infrastructure. Our state's school facilities are, on average, over 65-years-old. Yet, at Campbell High School, enrollment stands at 3,049 students, up 15 percent from 2010 and roughly 1,000 more students than in 2005. Campbell was built to serve 1,700 students, meaning that it is operating at 80 percent overcapacity.

Campbell is not the only school facing overcrowding. Numerous schools throughout the state crowd keiki into crumbling buildings, creating classroom experiences that inhibit learning and impede safety. Nonetheless, providing \$200,000 in seed money for charter schools is not and should not be the solution to overcrowded classrooms.

While we appreciate this bill's attempt to ease school congestion, we do not believe charter schools should be used as a means to address overcrowding and infrastructure problems. Overcrowding must be solved by increasing funding for public schools.

HSTA does believe that all charter schools, not just new charter schools, deserve funding for facilities. Currently across the state charter schools have to use rundown buildings, and even lanais to provide classrooms. These "facilities" are not conducive to learning, and do need to change. HSTA is proposing a \$10 million a year fund be used to help all charter schools.

We urge to escalate public school funding by passing legislation to raise the general excise tax by one percent, with the revenue generated being dedicated to capital improvement projects, educational programming, and teacher recruitment and retention. We feel that this will support the intent of this bill to ease overcrowding and by providing funds for charter school facilities.

**From:** [mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov)  
**To:** [EDU Testimony](#)  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** Submitted testimony for SB2797 on Feb 1, 2016 13:15PM  
**Date:** Friday, January 29, 2016 10:54:35 AM

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**SB2797**

Submitted on: 1/29/2016

Testimony for EDU on Feb 1, 2016 13:15PM in Conference Room 229

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Usha Kilpatrick Kotner	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Start-up funding is essential to the success of a new school. Schools should be provided the support necessary in order to offer an excellent education to their students beginning in their first year.

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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