



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

**Date:** 02/23/2017

**Time:** 09:30 AM

**Location:** 211

**Committee:** Senate Ways and Means

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Kathryn S. Matayoshi, Superintendent of Education

**Title of Bill:** SB 0553 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

**Purpose of Bill:** Requires remote schools to be allocated funds using categorical allotments, rather than through the weighted student formula. Defines a remote school as any public school that is a high school located at least a one-hour drive away from the next nearest high school or a high school located on the island of Lana'i, Moloka'i, or Ni'ihau. Specifies minimum number of teachers for Hana high and elementary school.

**Department's Position:**

The Department does not support SB 0553.

Hana High and Elementary, Lanai High and Elementary, and Molokai High would all be designated as "remote schools," as each is at least a one-hour drive away from the nearest public high school, and removed from receiving funding based on the weighted student formula (WSF). Ni'ihau, which typically has an enrollment of approximately 11 students, is already funded outside of the WSF.

Two of these three schools are K-12 combination schools. In 2015, the Committee on Weights (COW) IX recommended and the Board of Education approved increasing "Base" funding for K-12 combination schools from \$525,024 in the 2016 school year to \$673,048 in the 2017 school year. Currently, COW X has begun meeting to determine if additional considerations are warranted to equitably distribute limited WSF funds in a manner that recognizes the relative cost of educating any students.

For this Act to take effect on July 1, 2017, a source of funds to establish categorical funding for remote schools would need to be identified.

Categorical funding of remote schools in a way that would "guarantee the funding of a minimum number of instructional and support staff to ensure that at least minimum course requirements are maintained" would pose a logistical challenge, as the Department lacks a source of funds that can float up or down from year to year with fluctuations in each schools' enrollment, course

offerings, and class sizes.

The Department recommends that Hana High and Elementary remain in WSF, but possibly receive supplemental categorical funding to support additional instructional and support staff if such funds are appropriated by the Legislature.



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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
WAYS AND MEANS

RE: SB 553 - RELATING TO EDUCATION

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2017

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT  
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Tokuda and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **supports and proposes amendments for SB 553**, relating to education.

Since the passage of Act 51 in 2004, Hawai'i has experimented with a weighted student formula to equalize school funding. Intended to make funding for public education more equitable, transparent, and decentralized, WSF had the unintended consequence of limiting academic programming for children in small and rural schools. A recent report commissioned by the Hawai'i Department of Education and completed by the American Institutes of Research reveals that "small or isolated schools do not have adequate funding under WSF and that the formula does not account adequately for diseconomies of scale associated with small schools or for additional costs due to geographic isolation."

Small and geographically remote schools sometimes lack sufficient funds to cover programming above and beyond basic operations. Isolated communities lack the economic breadth available to their urban counterparts, while experiencing distance from essential services and less access to technology. The AIR, therefore, suggested that "extra support" be provided to schools that are small or isolated, including a recalculation of WSF to "accurately account for the differential costs of providing an equal opportunity for all students to achieve, regardless of their individual needs or circumstances (such as geographic location)."

That said, we feel that this measure could be used to address staffing shortfalls experienced by all remote schools. Because student populations at remote schools vary dramatically from year to year, funding for positions at such schools also changes annually, creating turbulence in staff requirements and course offerings. Accordingly, we encourage your committee to amend this measure by elevating the minimum staffing levels contained in Section 3 of this bill into statute, so that all small and rural schools will be guaranteed the same fundamental staffing positions that the bill proposes for Hana High and Elementary, regardless of student enrollment.

To increase funding equity throughout our state's public school system, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.