

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



CATHERINE PAYNE
CHAIRPERSON

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

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Tel: (808) 586-3775 Fax: (808) 586-3776

FOR: SB 197 Relating to Charter Schools
DATE: Monday, January 30, 2017
TIME: 2:45 PM
COMMITTEE(S): Senate Committee on Education
ROOM: Conference Room 229
FROM: Sione Thompson, Executive Director
State Public Charter School Commission

Testimony in support SB 197

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

The State Public Charter School Commission appreciates the opportunity to submit this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 197, which would appropriate \$200,000 to make start-up grants available to pre-opening charter schools that would address priority system needs identified by the Commission. We are grateful to Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kahele, and senators Espero, Ruderman, Shimabukuro, Chang, Dela Cruz, English, Galuteria, Inouye, Nishihara and Riviere who support the introduction of this bill and for their continued support for public charter schools as a potential solution to school overcrowding.

In its current Request for Proposals for new charter schools, the Commission has 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 present alternatives for improving academic outcomes in their communities. 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. Because pre-opening charter schools will not receive their funding to open and operate the

new charter school until July 20th of the year they are scheduled to open their doors, having this start-up grant would assist new charters in this critical time period.

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 hopes to pursue in the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.



SB197
RELATING TO CHARTER SCHOOLS
Senate Committee on Education

January 30, 2017

2:45 PM

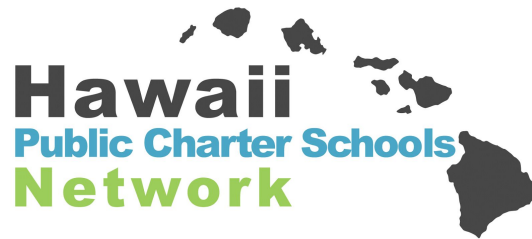
Room 229

The Administration of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) will recommend to the Board of Trustees a position of **SUPPORT** on SB197, which appropriates funding for fiscal years 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 for newly approved public charter schools, to assist with the substantial pre-opening costs associated with meeting the priority needs identified by the State Public Charter School Commission (Commission).

For a period of time prior to the Commission's creation in Act 130, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2012, state start-up grants were made available to newly approved, pre-opening public charter schools to assist with their substantial pre-opening costs. These state start-up grants provided much needed funding to new public charter schools, particularly as these schools endeavored to establish themselves in their various communities, explore fundraising opportunities, and meet other start-up priorities. Currently, however, pre-opening public charter schools have no such state assistance in meeting their numerous fiscal challenges. Furthermore, Hawai'i Revised Statutes Section 302D-14.5 precludes pre-opening schools from accessing per-pupil and other funding available to operational public charter schools, exacerbating their fiscal burden during this critical period in their development.

OHA has been a strong supporter of Hawai'i's public charter schools, many of which provide a culturally-grounded education for Native Hawaiian and other children. Seventeen of the thirty-four public charter schools in Hawai'i are Hawaiian-focused and Hawaiian language immersion charter schools, in which OHA has invested over \$15,000,000 since FY 2006 (School Year 2005-2006). OHA has made this investment because research has found that Hawaiian students exposed to culturally-driven educational strategies have a stronger sense of socio-emotional well-being, deeper engagement with their schools, and a stronger commitment to civic activities in their community, factors which are directly tied to greater academic achievement. Easing the fiscal burdens borne by pre-opening public charter schools may allow a greater number of students, including Native Hawaiian students, to access the advantages of a culturally-driven education through our public charter school system.

Accordingly, OHA urges the Committee to **PASS** SB197. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



January 27, 2017

To: Honorable Michelle Kidani, Chair
Honorable Kaiali'i Kahele, Vice Chair
Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Member
Honorable Will Espero, Member
Honorable Gil Riviere, Member
Senate Committee on Education

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

**Re: SB 197 – RELATING TO CHARTER SCHOOLS – Support
Conference Room 229 – Hawaii State Capitol – Jan. 30, 2017, 2:45 P.M.**

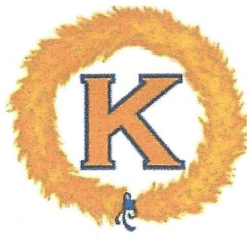
On behalf of the Hawaii Public Charter School Network (HPCSN), I am submitting our testimony in support of [SB 197](#), Relating to Charter Schools.

This bill would authorize start up funding for newly approved, pre-opening public charter schools.

This initiative is a much-needed step to provide funding for start-up grants that help new charter schools approved by the Charter School Commission. Previously, Hawaii's 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 fundraising resources especially as they seek to grow enrollment or add grades over time, which helps charter schools become more sustainable. The provision of state start-up grants have helped several public charter schools gain firmer footing in the early years as schools become established in their respective communities.

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. Mahalo for your consideration!



KAMALANI ACADEMY

1403A California Avenue
Wahiwa, HI 96786

January 28, 2017

Dear Legislators:

I am the Chairperson of the Board of Directors for Kamalani Academy - a newly approved, pre-opening charter school, opening in Wahiawa in August 2017. I am also a lifetime Oahu resident and mother of ten (10) native children. I am writing in support of SB 197 because I believe strongly and passionately in the state's responsibility to provide diversity of choice in the realm of public education.

Kamalani Academy will be employing an arts integration teaching model. Studies show that this approach to learning, which encourages movement and participation, results in a deeper and longer lasting understanding in most students. Our school will also proudly focus on Hawaiian culture and instilling important life skills such as cooperation, collaboration, and community.

Our biggest challenges as a start-up have been financial. In addition to building a future operating budget based on a per pupil allocation of roughly half the amount received by other public schools, we have not received any funding for our facility or start-up costs. We have been fortunate to have the support of Academica, a national company that has helped us bridge the gap between our school's conception and opening (when we will begin to receive state funding). Even with Academica's help, however, we have been challenged to secure adequate space to meet the great need of Wahiawa and the surrounding community. In fact, just to secure the modest space we need for our opening year, our Foundation has incurred roughly \$2 million in debt – that we will be working to pay down over the next two decades.

Charter schools offer vital academic choice and flexibility. To make these choices available for our local keiki, it is important that we provide adequate funding for these schools to flourish – from a passionate idea to a safe and successful school.

Please support SB 197 – which is good for our children, good for our communities, and good for Hawaii.

Mahalo nui loa!

Ku'uipo Laumatia

Board of Directors Chairperson

KAMALANI ACADEMY

kuuipo.laumatia@kamalaniacademy.org



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

TESTIMONY FOR SENATE BILL 197, RELATING TO CHARTER SCHOOLS

Senate Committee on Education
Hon. Michelle N. Kidani, Chair
Hon. Kaiali'i Kahele, Vice Chair

Monday, January 30, 2016, 2:45 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 opposition to Senate Bill 197, relating to charter schools.

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

In May of 2015, 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 become "school choice" models producing 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 governing boards composed of private interests—members of charter school boards, the State Auditor has noted, sometimes violate conflict-of-interest practices by comingling nonprofit and charter school affairs). In contrast, departmental schools are offered little flexibility and are tasked with meeting the needs of every student who walks through their classroom doors.

Thus, providing funds 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 quality public education. To address overcrowding in our state’s public school classrooms, we urge the committee to increase funding for facilities by amending the State Constitution to allow a surcharge to be levied on property taxes for visitor accommodations and residential investment units.

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 **oppose** this bill.

Sincerely,
Kris Coffield
Executive Director
IMUAlliance

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, January 30, 2017 8:33 AM
To: EDU Testimony
Cc: planetarystorm@hotmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB197 on Jan 30, 2017 14:45PM

SB197

Submitted on: 1/30/2017

Testimony for EDU on Jan 30, 2017 14:45PM in Conference Room 229

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
elizabeth	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Please vote yes to allocate money for Hawai'i STATE PUBLIC Charter Schools! There is no reason to not fully support these schools that have been thoroughly vetted and approved by the most rigorous process in the entire USA. I have personally witnessed the Hawai'i state charter school commission deny charter approval based on prejudice of being mainland based schools, even when there is huge support from the local HI community. If that is the case, then there is even more need home-based support! With these funds, start-up schools can put their efforts more towards creating the school they were designed to become rather than spend that crucial start up season on fundraising and finding less than desirable locations because their zero year has not had enough time to build up funding for facility acquisition. These funds are allocated for Hawaii's children and their education. All children should be supported in Public education whether it is a charter school or DOE school. The 2 should walk hand in hand.

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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From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Sunday, January 29, 2017 11:45 PM
To: EDU Testimony
Cc: akamaimom@gmail.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for SB197 on Jan 30, 2017 14:45PM*

SB197

Submitted on: 1/29/2017

Testimony for EDU on Jan 30, 2017 14:45PM in Conference Room 229

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Felicia Cowden	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Friday, January 27, 2017 10:52 PM
To: EDU Testimony
Cc: williamrandysmith@gmail.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for SB197 on Jan 30, 2017 14:45PM*

SB197

Submitted on: 1/27/2017

Testimony for EDU on Jan 30, 2017 14:45PM in Conference Room 229

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
William R Smith	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, January 30, 2017 10:42 AM
To: EDU Testimony
Cc: dkapua@gmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB197 on Jan 30, 2017 14:45PM

SB197

Submitted on: 1/30/2017

Testimony for EDU on Jan 30, 2017 14:45PM in Conference Room 229

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kapua Keliikoa-Kamai	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Aloha kakou, Mahalo for SB 197 as Charter School funding is very very limited. These funds will assist in enhancing an efficient & organized opening.

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