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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE

RE: SB 2381, SD 2, HD 1 - RELATING TO SCHOOL CLOSURES

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28, 2018

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Luke and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **supports SB 2381, SD 2, HD 1**, relating to school closures.

On October 23 and 24 of last year, Hawai'i was walloped by blustering thunderstorms. One of the hardest hit areas was Maui County, which saw flooding, widespread power outages, and downed trees and utility poles. At one point, nearly 66,500 people were without power on Maui, after lightning struck the island's electrical system. Power was not returned to Maui High School and Kalama Intermediate until the evening of the day after the storms had subsided.

Despite the danger to students and teachers, however, some shockingly schools chose to remain open, including Maui High, where only half of the school's 2,000 students showed up for class. Teachers and students alike could not navigate some roads that had been closed because of landslides and flooding, but their schools—like Baldwin High School—did not cancel classes, discounting clear and repeated warnings about dangerous conditions from state and county officials. When pressed to explain their reasoning, Department of Education officials and school principals cited a lack of clarity about who wields the authority to close a school and under what circumstances. That confusion must be remedied, if we're going to keep our children and their instructors safe.

To protect the well-being of students and teachers, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.

LATE

Written Only

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



DR. CHRISTINA M. KISHIMOTO
SUPERINTENDENT

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 2360
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Date: 03/28/2018
Time: 02:00 PM
Location: 308
Committee: House Finance

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB 2381, SD2, HD1 RELATING TO SCHOOL CLOSURES.

Purpose of Bill: Authorizes a school's principal to close the school without consulting the complex area superintendent in the event of an emergency created by a natural disaster if the principal deems it unsafe for students and faculty. (SB2381 HD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (HIDOE) does not support SB 2381, SD2, HD1.

School principals should routinely consult with the Complex Area Superintendent to ensure the proper chain-of-command is notified and that significant decisions are determined. Consulting with Complex Area Superintendents also ensures compliance with the National Incident Command System (NIMS) as required by Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD-5).

Currently, school principals have the right to evacuate their respective schools in cases of imminent danger such as natural disasters (i.e., tsunami lands within 30 minutes, etc.). In such cases, each school has Emergency Action plans (EAP) that provide specific procedures for evacuations and all emergencies to ensure the safety and security of school employees and students.

The Hawaii State Department of Education seeks to advance the goals of the Strategic Plan which is focused on student success, staff success, and successful systems of support. This is achieved through targeted work around three impact strategies: school design, student voice, and teacher collaboration. Detailed information is available at www.hawaiipublicschools.org.