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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
EDUCATION

RE: SCR 194/SR 131 - URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO ENSURE THAT ALL PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS, INCLUDING PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL STUDENTS, HAVE EQUAL ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES AND FOOD SERVICE

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28, 2018

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT  
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **supports SCR 194/SR131**, urging the Department of Education to ensure that all public school students, including public charter school students, have equal access to appropriate educational facilities and food service.

Facilities funding is a long-standing issue for charter schools. In Hawai'i, start-up charter schools have paid the costs of their facilities from operational funds. In 2013, however, lawmakers authorized the Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission to request facilities funding as part of its annual budget request. Later, in 2015, legislators called for a working group to establish a framework for providing facilities funding and support for public charter school facilities with adequate prioritization, oversight, and accountability.

Today, amounts received by charter schools fail to keep pace with the cost of providing and quality instruction and maintaining adequate facilities. Charter schools receive \$7,323 per-pupil, most of which is disbursed toward operational expenses, often leaving charters to rely on private donations to fund facilities and rent. Charter schools' per-pupil operating funds cover items like salaries, collective bargaining costs, curricula, school supplies, equipment, and utilities, but do not

encompass the facilities and maintenance costs that comprise approximately 10 percent of charter school budgets, according the Hawai'i Public Charter Schools Network.

Poorly funded charter schools are sometimes forced to hold classes in unstable temporary structures to the detriment of their students' learning and safety. Accordingly, we urge the Legislature to approve additional state funds for the repair, maintenance, acquisition, and rental of charter school facilities. We also encourage your committee to consider ways of improving charter school facilities funding over the long-term to ensure that our state's charter school students have the opportunity to receive instruction in 21<sup>st</sup> Century facilities that prepare them for today's cutting-edge workplace.

Moreover, we appreciate that this measure urges equitable funding for student meals for charter school students. Every public school student should be provided access to school meals. In Hawai'i, food insecurity is one of the most pressing manifestations of overall socioeconomic inequality. Nearly 91,000 public school students qualify for free or reduced-price meals in our state. For the 2016-2017 school year, 50.5 percent of public school students were classified as "economically challenged." Thus, for many students, school meals may be the only nutrition they receive during the day.

The number of students qualifying for the Department of Education's free and reduced lunch program has risen by over 20 percent since 2007 because of economic decline and cost of living increases. Low-income students are, again, less likely to receive adequate meals at home, leaving them without the basic sustenance necessary to perform academic tasks. Cases of chronic hunger can lead to achievement gaps, concentration loss, illness, increased absenteeism, behavioral problems, depression, and misdiagnosed learning disabilities. Providing a decent meal for our children, therefore, is a moral and educational imperative, especially when those children live in the high-poverty districts serviced by many charter schools (including a disproportionately high percentage of charter schools that emphasize Hawaiian culture).

To provide charter schools with the funds they need for their students to succeed, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this resolution.



March 28, 2018

Via: Electronic Upload

Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair  
Senator Kaiali'i Kahele, Vice Chair  
State of Hawai'i, Senate  
Committee on Education

RE: SCR194/SR131 - URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO ENSURE THAT ALL PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS, INCLUDING PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL STUDENTS, HAVE EQUAL ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES AND FOOD SERVICE.

Aloha Chair Kidani and Honorable Members,

The Prince Kūhiō Hawaiian Civic Club **SUPPORTS** SCR194/SR131. These resolutions call upon the department of education to ensure that all public school students, including our public charter school students, have equal access to appropriate educational facilities and food service. There are approximately 12,000 public charter school students that do not have equal access to facilities and food service. Further, many of these school children are eligible for free or reduced meals but are not being provided them. Let us work with the department to help ensure that our keiki can focus on their education with appropriate facilities and food in their bellies.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Ke aloha no,

Anthony Makana Paris  
Pelekikena