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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
LOWER & HIGHER EDUCATION

RE: HB 2496 - MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR SCHOOLS IN THE  
NANAKULI-WAIANAЕ COMPLEX AREA

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2020

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT  
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **strongly supports HB 2496** which appropriates funds for schools in the Nanakuli-Waianae Complex Area.

HSTA supports any and all complexes to have funds appropriated for to install air conditioning in their schools. It's hot in Hawai'i. According to the National Weather Service, our state set over 50 high temperature records in the summer of 2015, with the heat and humidity lingering well into the start of fall. In our schools, children and teachers alike became ill from the blistering conditions. Kalaheo High School science teacher Micah Pregitzer recorded temperatures as high as 108 degrees inside his classroom in 2016, telling reporters, "You're dripping in sweat when you're just sitting there grading papers by yourself with no students in the room. You get the room packed with 36, 38, sometimes 40 students, and it just boosts that temperature up even higher." If this is happening on the Windward side, we can guarantee that our students in the Nanakuli-Waianae complexes are suffering too. Some teachers at Waianae schools have seven fans in their classrooms and it is still like a convection oven, just blowing around hot air. It is not o.k. We need to protect our keiki and not allow them to suffer in their classrooms. They need to be comfortable so that they can focus on their learning, not their extreme discomfort.

A recent study conducted by University of California at Los Angeles researchers showed that the percentile gap between students learning in air conditioned and non-air-conditioned environments can reach as much as 17 percent on achievement tests, clearly evincing the impact of a comfortable classroom environment on student success. In a longitudinal analysis contained in "Effects of the Physical Environment

on Student Learning,” moreover, Glen I. Earthman of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University found that students between 4th and 9th grade at demographically similar schools showed increased gains in reading vocabulary, total math, problem solving, math procedures, pre-writing, and editing at schools with air conditioning, as compared with peers from non-cooled schools. Earthman demonstrated that the longer and more consistently students are exposed to classroom cooling, the better and more stable their performance gains tend to be. Conversely, students exposed to thermal conditioning for only short or intermittent periods of time achieved less than their peers. These findings are supported by U.S. Department of Education sponsored research, which claims that proper cooling systems lead to better attitudes toward learning, fewer disciplinary problems, and sustained achievement.

In 2017, thanks to Hawaii lawmakers, legislation was passed to cool 1,000 classrooms by appropriating \$100 million for heat abatement. At the same time, other legislation required achieving netzero energy usage by 2035. Due to the replacement of fluorescent lights and the installation of much more energy efficient LED lights in our schools, plus other energy-saving measures, the electrical demand on our schools has diminished enough to now be able to install regular window A/C units, without having to rewire entire schools. This is great news and now installing A/C will cost a considerable amount less not only to install, but it will also not cause a higher energy usage that when we had fluorescent lights and other energy- draining appliances in our schools. HSTA is excited about this news and looks forward to cooling the remaining 7,000 classrooms that need cooled across our state.

School should be cool. To make our classrooms more suitable for student learning, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.