

HB-609

Submitted on: 2/8/2021 8:54:30 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/11/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
cheryl B.	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Support.

All schools need support and especially those schools that provide learning for our students in remote locations.



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

Date: 02/11/2021

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 309 Via Videoconference

Committee: House Education
House Higher Education & Technology

Department: Education

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

Title of Bill: HB 0609 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Authorizes supplemental categorical funding for remote schools.
Appropriates funds.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 609, relating to Weighted Student Formula (WSF) and Remote Schools.

The Reinventing Education Act of 2004 (Act 51) established a weighted student formula as the primary funding mechanism for schools' operating funds. The WSF primarily distributes funds based on student enrollment and needs as defined by demographic characteristics. However, because of the diverse makeup of our communities here in the State of Hawaii, there are a handful of schools that are remote. Hawaii has schools that in are geographically remote areas with little or no alternatives for students in those communities. Many of these schools, because of their location, also have very small populations, which leads to a very small WSF allocation.

While the WSF currently also includes provisions for base funding intended to provide schools a fixed amount allocated to each school regardless of size, the total WSF funding (base funding plus per pupil funding) allocated to some of these remote schools may still require these schools to economize by combining grades into a single classroom or reducing course offerings.

The Department believes that allocating funds that are designated to target these specific remote schools will provide the students in these communities with more

opportunity and a more fulfilling learning experience. In addition, additional support will provide these schools with a predictable and reliable level of funding, which will assist them in their strategic academic planning from year to year.

Based on the criteria included in the bill, the Department has identified the following schools that would be affected if this bill passes:

Maui County

Molokai High

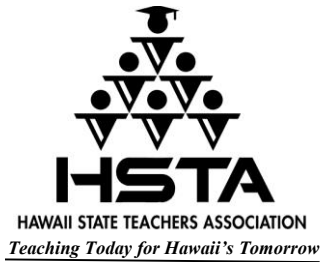
Lanai High and Elementary

Hana High and Elementary

Kauai County

Niihau School, which is currently funded via categorical funds and does not receive a WSF allocation.

The Hawai'i State Department of Education is committed to delivering on our promises to students, providing an equitable, excellent, and innovative learning environment in every school to engage and elevate our communities. 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.



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Corey Rosenlee
President

Osa Tui Jr.
Vice President

Logan Okita
Secretary-Treasurer

Wilbert Holck
Executive Director

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION and the COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION &
TECHNOLOGY

RE: HB 609 - RELATING TO EDUCATION

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2021

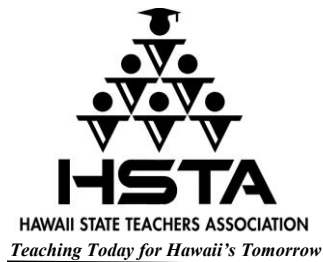
COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Woodson, Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committees:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **strongly supports** HB 609, relating to education. This bill authorizes supplemental categorical funding for remote schools. Appropriates funds

Since the passage of Act 51 in 2004, Hawai'i has experimented with a weighted student formula (WSF) 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 remote schools with limited student enrollment, thus limiting the funds they receive through the weighted student formula. 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)."



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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. Challenges faced by small and remote schools because of inadequate WSF funding include staffing shortages, cutbacks to courses, a lack of librarians, and more. At times, such schools do not have teachers to staff every grade level, if the school is an elementary school, or all core classes, if the school is a secondary school, presenting problems in the provision of minimum educational requirements to students. We cannot allow these schools to continue to struggle because of enrollment and geographical factors beyond their control.

To provide all of Hawai'i's children with access to a quality education, including those students who attend a remote school, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.