



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

**Date:** 03/11/2021  
**Time:** 02:00 PM  
**Location:** 309 & 430 Via  
Videoconference  
**Committee:** House Education

**Department:** Education

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

**Title of Resolution:** HCR 0053 REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO PROVIDE A REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE ON PUBLIC SCHOOL CLASS SIZES.

### **Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) provides the following comments on HCR 53 that requests the Department provide a report to the legislature on public school class sizes.

The Department stands committed to ensuring that our students receive a quality education and understands the importance of smaller class sizes and the effects it has on student achievement.

The current resolution as written requires the report to contain specific information on class sizes and student-to-teacher ratios disaggregated by general education, special education, and the English-language learner program. Some of the information requested may not be available at the detailed level being requested and would need to be built into current data systems in order to collect the data. In these cases, it is possible that current data systems will require modifications.

Our current system is able to capture class-size data for fully self-contained and secondary resource classrooms. However, students with disabilities included in the general education classroom setting occurs in various degrees and via various inclusion models throughout the state. This data is not currently tracked and would be difficult to capture. A student's educational placement, to include the percentage of time spent in a general education setting, what would be considered inclusion, is currently tracked and could be used as a possible data point. Placement of students with disabilities is determined by the Individualized Education Program team and changes as student needs change.

It is important to note that class size is dependent on the capacity - staffing, facilities, equipment and supplies - that each school has to offer the class as well as the class itself. A band class will

have more students than an automotive technology class and a special education class for medically fragile students will have less students than an inclusion class.

Although special education care coordinator caseloads can be collected, it is not comparable and varies greatly as it is dependent on the severity of disabilities and needs of the students on the caseload.

In the interest of transparency, the Department is committed to continue working with the Legislature to provide the appropriate information regarding class sizes in our public schools.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HCR 53.

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](http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org).



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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
EDUCATION and THE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND

THURSDAY, MARCH 11, 2021

RE: HCR 53 / HR 42 – REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO  
PROVIDE A REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE ON PUBLIC SCHOOL CLASS  
SIZES.

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT  
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **strongly supports HCR 53/ HR 42**,  
requesting the Department of Education to provide a report to the legislature on  
public school class sizes.

While the DOE reports, each year, on teacher-student ratios, **these numbers are often skewed by the number of teachers pulled out of the classroom to serve as de facto departmental employees or “resource teachers” and do not account for the total number of classes above the department’s reported or the Board of Education’s suggested ratios.** Our teachers regularly oversee classes above the suggested maximums provided by the Board of Education, sometimes managing rosters with as many as 40 or 50 enrollees and total workloads of over 200 students. As the number of special needs students or English language learners increases in any class, so does the need for individualized instruction. Accordingly, we view lowering class size as one of the most instrumental and obvious methods of boosting learning growth and improving teachers’ work conditions. **It is hard to call for the reduction of class sizes when the reporting of our class sizes is wrong when reported by the department, as it is skewed by them counting teachers at a school who are non-classroom teachers, and dividing it by the total amount of students enrolled at a school. It should be based on actual class rosters to be a valid class size.**

The reason and accurate reporting of class size is necessary is that research shows a smaller class size is one of four best evidence-based reforms that have proven to increase student achievement. The Institute of Education Sciences, the research arm of the U.S. Department of Education, concludes that class

size reduction is one of only four evidence-based reforms that have been proven to increase student achievement. Experiments in Tennessee, Wisconsin, and other states have demonstrated that students in smaller classes score better on standardized tests, receive better grades, and exhibit improved attendance.

**Moreover, poor and minority students benefit the most from smaller class sizes, experiencing twice the achievement gains of the average student.** A study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education analyzed the achievement of students in 2,561 schools across the nation by their performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress exams. After controlling for student background, the only objective factor that correlated with higher test scores was class size.

Hawai'i State Board of Education Policy 2237 states: "The Board of Education is committed to reducing class size in order to promote quality instruction and positive teacher-student interaction. Reducing class size at the lower grade level is critical in educating students as they begin the basic tenets of learning to read and write and do math. Reducing class size at the lower grade level is an imperative strategy to support student learning and achievement. Research supports a lower student to teacher ratio in the lower grades for optimum teaching and learning. The optimum class size for grades K-3 shall be 20:1; provided that the maximum class size for grades K-2 shall be 25:1. The optimum class size for grades 4-12 shall be 26:1. The Department of Education shall implement this policy to ensure that instructional personnel and other staff are allocated in a manner that is educationally sound, instructionally appropriate, and as funds are available."

Because lower class sizes yield higher achievement, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this resolution to request that the Department of Education accurately report class sizes to the legislature, as outlined in this resolution, to effectively plan for the achievement of our students.