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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 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.

**HR-42**

Submitted on: 3/10/2021 7:07:56 AM

Testimony for EDN on 3/11/2021 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
John Bickel	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I left the DOE in 2001. My last total student load at Roosevelt High School was 157 students. My student load at 'Iolani in the fall of 2001 was 57. It made a world of difference. By keeping class sizes high we are cheating our students out of a quality experience. Part of that problem is teachers like me leaving the DOE because of the class size issue. This study is a start I hope.