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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: SCR 203 / SR 168 – URGING THE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO FORM A SPECIAL COMMITTEE OR PERMITTED INTERACTION GROUP TO MONITOR AND ACCOUNT FOR HOW THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IS SPENDING ITS FEDERAL RELIEF FUNDS.

FRIDAY, MARCH 19, 2021

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** SCR 203/HR 168, requesting the Board of Education to form a special committee or permitted interaction group to monitor and account for how the department of education is spending federal relief funds.

There has been much delay and confusion as to how the Department of Education has proposed spending Federal CARES Act money, ESSER funding, and we are unsure at this time about how the department will spend the most recent federal funds from the American Rescue Act.

As the Board of Education has also been concerned, and thankfully have taken action to ensure that differentials for our hard to staff teacher positions were funded first, along with prioritizing that we retain our teachers and support personnel first with any federal funds, as allowable. This resolution would show the legislature's support that the BOE form a special committee or permitted interaction group, that could focus on ensuring that these funds, and as any new funds become available, that the priorities the BOE has set are followed by the Department of Education.

Actions need to happen as soon as possible in order to avoid potential long term losses of teachers and other support employees within the HODOE and to protect the long term impact to our students. Thus, HSTA asks your committee to **support** this resolution.



Committee on Education
Senator Michelle Kidani, Chair
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair

March 19, 2021

Dear Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and Members of the Committee,

This testimony is in support of SCR 203/SR 168, which urges the BOE to form a Permitted Interaction Group to monitor and account for how the DOE is spending its federal relief funds.

The DOE has received and will receive an unprecedented amount of COVID-19 relief funds from the federal government. Direct funding to the DOE thus far has been \$43 million in CARES Act funding and over \$183 million in ESSER II funding. Through the American Rescue Plan, the DOE stands to receive close to an additional \$400 million. We are grateful that the DOE is receiving this extraordinary amount of federal funds to help recover from the pandemic, and it is imperative that these funds are used strategically to help the system to help reach our overall education goal of college, career and citizenship for all students.

In furtherance of its policy-making role, the BOE needs to provide clear guidance to the DOE on how to use these one-time additional funds. These funds provide a tremendous opportunity to make strategic investments in the school system that can have lasting impact. Therefore, we support the BOE creating a Permitted Interaction Group (PIG) to have a strategic discussion about use of these federal funds and come up with appropriate guidance to the DOE. Because usage of the funds impacts all aspects of our school system, we suggest that the investigative group be made up of the BOE Chair and the Chairs of all the BOE Committees, Human Resources, Student Achievement, and Finance and Infrastructure.

We suggest that this investigative committee could provide guidance to DOE with respect to strategic usage of the federal funds creating a framework that looks at near-term, mid-term and long-term needs of the system.

As for near-term, the DOE must urgently address the learning loss that has occurred during the past year due to disruptions in instruction from COVID-19. Learning loss, which is reflected in our wide achievement gap, was occurring before COVID-19, and the pandemic has exacerbated the situation for our most vulnerable students. In order to make sound short-term policy, BOE should analyze how the DOE has traditionally provided supports for our high needs students and try to build on that. Summer learning and afterschool learning should be utilized but positive impact depends on effective designs of these programs.

For mid-term, the BOE should understand the objectives of the DOE for upcoming 2021-2022 school year. Looking at where our students are now, what does the DOE hope to realistically achieve for the next school year? What are the DOE's targets? How will the DOE transition to a "new normal" of in-person learning? How will the DOE know if its plans are working and how does it plan to adjust if things are not going as well as expected?

For long-term, we suggest that the BOE determine what initiatives can create positive, long-term impacts on the system. For example, investment in the elementary school, specifically in literacy, can have a huge impact on mitigating learning lost. Research shows that students who are proficient in English Language Arts in the 3rd grade will have a far better chance of graduating high school than those who are not. If we are able to improve literacy in the early years with an additional investment now, we will not need to expend as many dollars in the later years on remediation, which will ultimately benefit all students.

If the BOE needs additional staff to effectively conduct strategic analysis, perhaps it should consider using some of the federal funds for this purpose as we believe it will greatly enhance its ability to provide critical guidance to the DOE.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Our support represents a 75% consensus or more of our voting membership.

Sincerely,

Cheri Nakamura
HE'E Coalition Director



Academy 21
American Civil Liberties Union
After-School All-Stars Hawai'i
Alliance for Place Based Learning
*Castle Complex Community Council
*Castle-Kahuku Principal and CAS
Coalition for Children with Special Needs
Education Institute of Hawai'i
*Faith Action for Community Equity
Fresh Leadership LLC
Girl Scouts Hawaii
Harold K.L. Castle Foundation
*HawaiiKidsCAN
*Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance
*Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
*Hawai'i Association of School Psychologists
Hawai'i Athletic League of Scholars
*Hawai'i Charter School Network
*Hawai'i Children's Action Network
Hawa'i Education Association
Hawai'i Nutrition and Physical Activity Coalition
* Hawai'i State PTSA
Hawai'i State Student Council
Hawai'i State Teachers Association
Hawai'i P-20
Hawai'i 3Rs
Head Start Collaboration Office
It's All About Kids
*INPEACE
Joint Venture Education Forum
Junior Achievement of Hawaii
Kamehameha Schools
Kanu Hawai'i
*Kaua'i Ho'okele Council
Keiki to Career Kaua'i
Kupu A'e
*Leaders for the Next Generation
Learning First
McREL's Pacific Center for Changing the Odds
Native Hawaiian Education Council
Our Public School
*Pacific Resources for Education and Learning
*Parents and Children Together
*Parents for Public Schools Hawai'i
Special Education Provider Alliance
*Teach for America
The Learning Coalition
US PACOM
University of Hawai'i College of Education

Voting Members () Voting member organizations vote on action items while individual and non-voting participants may collaborate on all efforts within the coalition.*

SCR-203

Submitted on: 3/17/2021 10:15:04 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/19/2021 3:21:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Leimomi Khan	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Accountability is important to assure that the funds received satisfied the intent of its use. It's also a way to show the government that the UH decisions on expenditures merited the allocation of funds received.