



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

Date: 02/15/2022

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 309 Via Videoconference

Committee: House Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Interim Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB 1914 RELATING TO SENSORY ROOMS.

Purpose of Bill: Requires the department of education to construct and implement sensory rooms for children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder in all public schools. Appropriates funds for the planning, design, and construction of the sensory rooms. Appropriates funds for special education teachers to staff the sensory rooms.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) opposes HB 1914 as there is inconclusive scientific research to indicate that sensory rooms are a valid evidence-based practice to address the sensory needs of an individual with autism spectrum disorder. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) requires that evidence-based practices are utilized when choosing and implementing interventions for students with disabilities.

The IDEA also requires that students with disabilities be provided a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. Removal of students eligible under autism spectrum disorder to a sensory room would separate them from their non-disabled peers.

If a student with autism spectrum disorder qualifies for specialized support services due to his/her sensory needs during the school day, the Department has specialized support personnel with subject matter expertise who will use available research to determine and develop appropriate evidence-based practices that address the student's specific sensory needs ensuring the student can benefit from and access his/her education in their least restrictive environment.

The Department's Office of Facilities and Operations will continue to work with the specialized support service personnel and individual school teams to address any facilities needs that may

arise to address specific student needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

HB-1914

Submitted on: 2/15/2022 8:49:10 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/15/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Keith Hayashi	Hawaii Department of Education	Oppose	Yes

Comments:

Oppose

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR

GLORIA CHANG
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
P.O. BOX 150
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND
MANAGEMENT DIVISION
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT (OFAM)

WRITTEN ONLY
TESTIMONY BY CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 1914

February 15, 2022
2:00 p.m.
Room 309 and Videoconference

RELATING TO SENSORY ROOMS

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on House Bill (H.B.) No. 1914.

H.B. No. 1914: 1) requires the Department of Education to construct and implement sensory rooms for children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder in all public schools; 2) appropriates an undetermined sum of general funds for FY 23 for the planning, design, and construction of the sensory rooms; and 3) establishes an undetermined number of full-time equivalent special education teacher positions and appropriates an undetermined sum of general funds for FY 23 for special education teachers to staff the sensory rooms.

B&F notes that, with respect to the general fund appropriation in this bill, the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act requires that states receiving Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) II funds and Governor's Emergency Education Relief II funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

Further, the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act requires that states receiving ARP ESSER funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

The U.S. Department of Education has issued rules governing how these maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements are to be administered. B&F will be working with the money committees of the Legislature to ensure that the State of Hawai'i complies with these ESSER MOE requirements.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

HB-1914

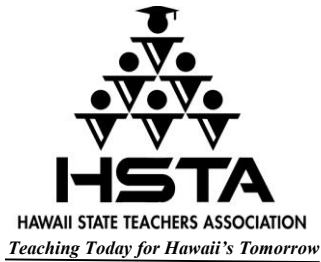
Submitted on: 2/11/2022 6:12:49 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/15/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Louis Erteschik	Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Support	No

Comments:

We think this is an excellent idea. It will have a calming effect on these children and will help them in their behavior and their learning.



Osa Tui, Jr.
President
Logan Okita.
Vice President
Lisa Morrison
Secretary-Treasurer
Wilbert Holck
Executive Director

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB 1914 - RELATING TO EDUCATION

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2022

OSA TUI, JR., PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

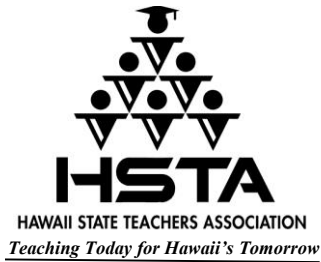
Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **supports HB 1914**, relating to education. This bill requires the department of education to construct and implement sensory rooms for children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder in all public schools. Appropriates funds for the planning, design, and construction of the sensory rooms. Appropriates funds for special education teachers to staff the sensory rooms.

Sensory rooms are areas that are established to help students calm down or refocus during the school day. It addresses Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) student's atypical reactions to stressors that could include self-injurious behaviors and injury to others once escalated. Hence the need for any special area to relax, and refresh (decompress) **before** there are outbursts in order to prevent them-rather than a response to an outburst. We **don't** want a sensory room to be used as a "reward" or isolation for bad behavior. **Having a sensory room at a school is a preventative measure, for calming, relaxing, and refreshing (decompressing) so that an outburst doesn't occur.**

In addition to students with Autism, research shows that sensory rooms support students with vision difficulties, language difficulties, learning disabilities and emotional disturbances. It also provides opportunities for young children to work on their proprioceptive and vestibular systems which help them become aware of how their bodies move and how they can control their movements. **These rooms contain various items that help relieve anxiety or overstimulation that may occur in the classroom. The goal of sensory room items is to allow children a break and have a pleasurable experience through special implements that relate to textures, lights, sounds, and smells.**

Having sensory rooms in schools can benefit students immediately and lead to improved outcomes. Sometimes, students with autism, behavioral challenges, or attention deficits may be sent out of their district for services. However, a sensory room at the school site provides these students with a safe place within a familiar setting-and in the least restrictive environment.



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Sensory rooms help in more ways than one. Students in general education classes, special day programs, and resource learning centers can all benefit, as well. As children return from sensory rooms refreshed, calm, and rejuvenated, they often improve their classroom behaviors and performance.

The Hawaii State Teachers Association agrees with the purpose of this Act to ensure there are sensory rooms at each of our public schools, and should appropriate funds to hire licensed special education teachers to staff the sensory rooms. The HSTA recommends this bill also be written to include **public charter schools as they are also part of our public school system.**

To support our teachers with students with special needs who need sensory rooms, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.

HB-1914

Submitted on: 2/11/2022 6:54:33 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/15/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Michael Press	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

As a teacher at Ilima in Ewa Beach Oahu, I support this bill.

Michael Press

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION - HB 1914 RELATING TO SENSORY ROOMS

**STRONG SUPPORT FOR SENSORY ROOMS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Aloha members of the committee,

I am a Special Education Teacher at McKinley High School, in the Fully Self-Contained room.

Currently, I have 5 ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) students in my classroom of 10 students. I am also getting one more student with an ASD diagnosis – which I will then have 6 ASD students in my classroom. It does get overwhelming at times.

The need to have a Sensory Room has been an ongoing issue. I have been at McKinley High School for three years and we have not been able to secure a Sensory Room until last month – January, 2022. For my group of students it became an issue of Safety.

It is important to have a “safe place” for these students to go to when they are escalating in their behaviors. They are able to be in a space that will help them to calm down and reduce their anxiety due to a “sensory overload” from being in the classroom with other students.

ASD students can “trigger” each other’s behaviors due to “sensory overload”. Not having a Sensory Room has made it very challenging at times to work with them. For example, one ASD student might be escalating and without having another room to go to, the rest of the class leaves and goes outside until that student can de-escalate and it is safe for the class to return. If I don’t remove the rest of the class, the other ASD students start to escalate because they don’t have self-management or self-regulation skills quite yet.

An escalated ASD student varies in the way they express themselves. Some are very volatile and can hurt others (not on purpose) but because they will throw everything they can get a hold of. Other ASD students express their frustration through screaming and vulgar language or physical aggression. This is the case in my classroom.

Having that “safe place” for these students to go to and be able to calm themselves or self-regulate will help them to get out the frustration and anxiety that they are feeling. The Sensory Room is not a room for them to stay in for hours and hours. It is a safe place for them to go to for the time that they need it for - whether it be 25 or 45 minutes. It depends on each student.

The Sensory Room is also a therapeutic space that can be used before the student comes into the classroom. Some ASD students come to school with anxiety or “in a bad mood”. This is also a room they can start their day in, to calm down and focus so that they can go to class.

I am in full support of having Sensory Rooms on every DOE public school campus. As already mentioned in the bill, “Installing sensory rooms in Hawaii’s public schools will help children learn to self—regulate their behaviors and improve their focus, allowing them to achieve success in the classroom”.

Thank you for your consideration,

Shunya Ku’ulei Arakaki

McKinley High School, SPED Teacher

HB-1914

Submitted on: 2/14/2022 1:27:43 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/15/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Kalelani Ogata	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am a Special Education preschool teacher and have been teaching special needs students for over 20 years. Over those years I have had the opportunity to work with many different children with a variety of different needs. My experience has showed me that ALL students, including those with ASD, benefit greatly from sensory activities embedded into their daily schedule and lessons. I fully support HB1914 to put sensory rooms in all schools. When students understand their bodies, how their bodies move, and how they feel they are better equipped to participate in other academic areas. Thank you for your support!

Anne White
2/14/2022

Discussion on the Importance of Sensory Rooms in Schools

A sensory room—a therapeutic space with a variety of equipment that provides students with special needs with personalized sensory input—helps these children calm and focus themselves so they can be better prepared for learning and interacting with others.

Sensory Rooms



Why do schools have sensory rooms?

A sensory room is **designed to be a safe space to help those sensory issues.**

They are used to stimulate or calm the senses — sight, touch, and hearing — and provide a space for people with social integration disorder, autism, and other special educational needs to explore and develop their sensory skills.

<https://www.thestablecompany.com/blog/how-to-design-a-sensory-room>



Sensory Rooms Play an Important role in student learning and development.

- They provide a therapeutic environment for children with autism and other special educational needs
- Sensory equipment can be used to develop a range of physical skills
- The sensory room can act as a calming space for pupils experiencing emotional or behavioral difficulties

- Sensory rooms can help children learn to manage their emotions in a controlled environment, without feeling they are being isolated or punished
- Sensory rooms are also an ideal location for [ELSA sessions](#) and for therapy and counseling.

<https://www.vertisbuildings.com/blog/sensory-rooms-schools>

References:

<https://www.vertisbuildings.com/blog/sensory-rooms-schools>

<https://www.thestablecompany.com/blog/how-to-design-a-sensory-room>

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