



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 03/23/2023

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB 0106, SD2, HD1 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Authorizes the Department of Health to require the Department of Education to report coronavirus disease 2019 potential outbreaks or other public health emergencies and related information in a manner most appropriate to public health and safety, as determined by the Department of Health. Repeals the requirement to publish the report on the Department of Education's website. (HD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports SB 106, SD2, HD1, which requests changing from a weekly Department report on school Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) to reporting potential outbreaks and related information in a manner most appropriate to public health and safety, as determined by the Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH).

Given the prevalence of the COVID-19 vaccine and the mitigation strategies that have proven effective, the weekly COVID-19 reporting requirement is an administrative burden on schools that is yielding minimal benefits. The DOH still has a criteria for reporting a potential outbreak of COVID-19 similar to what is done for flu-like illnesses, with a protocol that existed many years prior to the recent epidemic.

The Department has a long history of collaboration with the DOH on reporting and responding to potential outbreaks of infectious illness at schools and is committed to continuing this collaboration on any and all protocols necessary to ensure public health

and safety.

The Department worked with the Chair of the House Committee on Health and appreciates her insertion of a clean effective date to allow for this bill to take effect immediately.

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



SB106 SD2 HD1
RELATING TO EDUCATION
House Committee on Education

March 23, 2023

2:00 PM

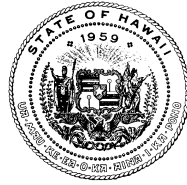
Room 309

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS SB106 SD2 HD1**, which would authorize the Department of Health to require the Department of Education to report Coronavirus disease case counts and other related information in a manner most appropriate to public health and safety, as determined by the Department of Health.

OHA works to improve the wellbeing of our Native Hawaiian beneficiaries, who may be experiencing or at risk of experiencing disparate COVID-19 impacts and believes that this bill will help to inform COVID-19 response and recovery efforts that can best ensure the safety of Native Hawaiian and other students, as well as their families and school staff. Accordingly, this measure would continue to provide the information needed to protect the community from transmission of the Coronavirus.

Although improvements have been made over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic here in Hawai‘i, with regard to the timeliness and granularity of reported data, significant uncertainties still exist. With new COVID-19 variants present and arriving in Hawai‘i, and with ongoing uncertainties regarding the effectiveness of current vaccines in preventing COVID-19 transmission, consistent, timely, and accurate data remains just as critical as it has been throughout this pandemic. This measure will help to provide accurate data necessary to ensure the success of our COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. The Department of Health is the most appropriate agency to determine what information is needed and when to provide it in order to ensure the health and safety of our keiki and Department of Education Staff.

OHA appreciates the opportunity to support this measure and respectfully asks that the Committee **PASS** SB106 SD2 HD1. Mahalo nui loa.



STATE OF HAWAII
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**Testimony in SUPPORT of S.B. 106 H.D. 1
RELATING TO EDUCATION**

REPRESENTATIVE JUSTIN H. WOODSON, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Hearing Date: 3/23/2023

Room Number: Conference Room 309 &
Videoconference

1 **Department Testimony:** Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of
2 Senate Bill 106 H.D. 1 which changes the weekly Department of Education report on school
3 coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases to reporting COVID-19 potential outbreaks or other
4 public health emergencies and related information in a manner most appropriate to public health
5 and safety, as determined by the Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH).

6 Given widespread availability of COVID-19 vaccine and other mitigation strategies that have
7 proven effective for controlling COVID-19 spread in schools, DOH recognized that the weekly
8 COVID-19 reporting requirement is an administrative burden on schools that provides minimal
9 benefits. The DOH has worked with DOE to establish criteria for reporting of potential outbreaks
10 of COVID-19. These criteria are similar to what DOE reports for flu-like illnesses, with a
11 protocol that existed many years prior to the recent epidemic. DOH and DOE have a long history
12 of collaboration on reporting and responding to potential outbreaks of infectious illness at
13 schools. DOH is committed to continuing this collaboration on any and all protocols necessary to
14 ensure public health and safety.

SB-106-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/21/2023 1:23:17 PM

Testimony for EDN on 3/23/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lynn Otaguro	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Marten, and members of the Education Committee:

I am writing in opposition to SB106 SD2 HD1, which will rescind the requirement that the Department of Education (DOE) report COVID-19 cases by school on a weekly basis.

As the State rolled back its COVID-19 protocols, people were told to keep informed and to take measures to keep themselves safe. Yet, information has become less accessible and it can be difficult to gauge the risk of infection.

While it might be said that the DOE and DOH should be allowed to determine the reporting of cases, it also should be noted that the requirement for the DOE to report cases by school arose because parents and community members asked for more information, and the measure passed over much objection by the DOE and DOH. The law was passed after override of the governor's veto which echoed DOE and DOH objections.

Because of the law, the DOE did publish COVID-19 cases by school on a weekly basis, and parents and community members have been able to check if a school has had COVID-19 cases. This has allowed families to find the information easily, and depending on the status of their school, it has allowed them to feel more at ease, to know that they should check if what they think is a cold is actually COVID-19, or to make sure that their child is taking steps to be safer. This is consistent with the purpose of the law to provide transparency and give families and community members information so that they can make better, informed decisions to keep themselves safe, which also makes the larger community safer.

There is a push to say that COVID-19 has ended, and we will likely see an end to emergency measures and support. In some ways, this points to a greater, not lesser, need for public access to information, as protective measures and support are withdrawn and people are left to fend for themselves to an even greater degree.

The harmful effects of COVID, past and present, continue. We can still watch the news and see Hawaii hospitals raise concerns about staffing. Long COVID, which can arise from mild cases, continues to harm those inflicted. Absences in school and work affect education and businesses. And there will likely continue to be infection surges with the presence of more transmissible variants of COVID that develop and spread globally.

While no one wants to unnecessarily burden the DOE, the website and means for meeting the reporting requirement already are in place. Rather than withdraw the access to information prematurely, it makes sense to ensure that parents and communities are receiving the information they need. When I asked a parent for his opinion about the change in the reporting requirement, he said that he is concerned about being told when there is a case in his child's class. His experience has been that access to information has been uneven.

Before withdrawing the reporting requirement, we should make sure that access to needed information is ensured. Until this is done, please vote against this bill to keep information available.

Thank you for your consideration.

Lynn Otaguro

SB-106-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/21/2023 5:22:37 PM

Testimony for EDN on 3/23/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Crossland	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this unnecessary Bill.