



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

House Committee on Education
Thursday, February 6, 2025
2:00 p.m.
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 309

Measure: House Bill 904, Relating to Charter Schools

Purpose of Measure:

Repeals the requirement for the Board of Education to annually report to the Legislature, Governor, and the public on public charter schools.

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee:

The Board of Education (Board) supports House Bill 904, and thanks the Committee for its efforts to promote government efficiency.

The State Public Charter School Commission – as the State’s only charter school authorizer – already submits a comprehensive annual report to the Legislature that details the items the Board is also required to report on. As such, we believe this bill reduces duplicative efforts, but not transparency.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify on behalf of the Board.



LATE

STATE OF HAWAII
WAI'ALAE ELEMENTARY PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL
1045 NINETEENTH AVENUE
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96816

Testimony in Opposition to H.B. 904

Relating to Charter Schools

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

As Interim Head of School at Wai'alae School, Hawai'i's first public charter school, I oppose H.B. 904, which would repeal the Board of Education's annual reporting requirement on public charter schools.

For 25 years, Wai'alae has been at the forefront of Hawai'i's charter school movement, creating a student-centered, joyful learning community that prepares students with the 21st Century skills they need to engage in a democratic society. Our experience demonstrates how charter schools serve as innovative laboratories for public education while maintaining transparency and accountability.

This bill would eliminate crucial oversight and transparency by removing the requirement for independent reporting on charter school successes, challenges, and needs. The current annual report serves several vital functions:

1. It provides an independent assessment of charter school performance and challenges beyond what individual authorizers report
2. It ensures public accountability through comprehensive reporting on federal funding distribution, facilities needs and funding, and policy impacts
3. It maintains charter schools' position as visible incubators of educational innovation, allowing their successes and lessons learned to benefit the broader public education system
4. It gives the Legislature and Governor critical information needed to make informed decisions about charter school policy and funding

Removing this reporting requirement would reduce transparency and potentially isolate charter schools from the broader public educational community. I believe we should be increasing, not decreasing, the visibility and accountability of charter schools as laboratories of innovation in public education. The BOE's annual report helps ensure that the innovative practices and lessons learned from charter schools can be shared across our public education system.



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I urge you to preserve this important oversight mechanism and vote "no" on H.B. 904.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Koalani Lagareta".

Koalani Lagareta
Interim Head of School
Wai'ala'e Elementary Public Charter School



Testimony Strongly Opposed to House Bill 904

*EDN on Thursday, 02-06-25 2:00PM in House
conference room 309*

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica and members of the House Committee on Education,

The Hawaii Public Charter Schools Network (HPCSN) strongly opposes HB 904, a bill that would repeal the requirement for the Board of Education (BOE) to issue an annual report on public charter schools. This bill, while seemingly innocuous, has the potential to severely undermine transparency and accountability within Hawaii's charter school system.

As you know, the BOE plays a crucial role in overseeing the performance and effectiveness of charter school authorizers. This oversight is mandated by §302D-11, which tasks the BOE with reviewing authorizer performance, addressing complaints, and ensuring compliance with nationally recognized standards for quality charter authorizing. The annual report required by §302D-21 serves as a critical tool for this oversight function. It should provide a comprehensive overview of the successes, challenges, and areas for improvement within the charter school system. It should also include vital information on the financial performance of charter schools, the allocation of facilities funding, and the status of previously awarded projects.

By repealing §302D-21, HB 904 would effectively eliminate the BOE's primary mechanism for publicly communicating its oversight findings and recommendations. This lack of transparency could have serious consequences:

- Reduced accountability for charter school authorizers: Without the annual report, authorizers would have less incentive to address deficiencies

identified by the BOE. This could lead to a decline in the quality of charter school education.

- Limited public awareness of charter school performance: The annual report provides valuable information to parents, policymakers, and the public about the performance of charter schools. Without this information, it would be more difficult to make informed decisions about charter school education.
- Weakened BOE oversight: The annual report also serves as a record of the BOE's oversight activities. Without this record, it would be more difficult to assess the effectiveness of the BOE's oversight and to identify areas for improvement.

Moreover, the repeal of §302D-21 raises concerns about the future of other related statutory provisions, specifically §302D-7 and §302D-11. These provisions outline the reporting requirements for charter school authorizers and the BOE's oversight responsibilities, respectively.

If §302D-21 is repealed, it is possible that §302D-7 and §302D-11 could also be challenged or weakened in the future. This would leave the Commission's accountability in question and could have a detrimental impact on the quality of education provided to Hawaii's charter school students.

This bill represents a dangerous step backward for transparency and accountability in Hawaii's charter school system. By repealing the requirement for the BOE to issue an annual report, this bill would severely limit the public's ability to assess the performance of charter schools and hold authorizers accountable for their actions. We urge you to reject HB 904 and uphold the BOE's critical oversight role in ensuring quality education for all of Hawaii's charter school students.

LATE

HB-904

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 3:12:21 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/6/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Steve Hirakami	Hawaii Public Charter Schools Network	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The BOE has the responsibility to report to the legislature and the general public on the Charter School Commission as well as the charter schools. This is important for transparency and to let the public know about this public education sector in the State of Hawaii. It also provides information to the public so that they know that charters are public schools. Retain this obligation of the BOE to report out.