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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOWER & HIGHER EDUCATION

RE: SB 392, SD2 - RELATING TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

TUESDAY, MARCH 19, 2019

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Woodson, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **strongly supports SB 392, SD2**, that appropriates funds to the Department of Education to provide up to \$1,690 to each special education classroom teacher for instructional materials and equipment.

Hawai'i struggles to meet the needs of special education students. Based on statewide assessments, most special needs students are performing below grade level in reading and mathematics. Each school year, the statewide achievement gap between high needs students—which includes special education children, English language learners, and economically disadvantaged students—and non-high needs students is far too wide and part of the reason is that teachers need specialized supplies and instructional materials for the specific learning needs of their students. They do not get enough of a budget to purchase all the supplies and instructional materials they need to adequately differentiate their instruction for their students.

Department of Education officials, including State Superintendent Christina Kishimoto, have stated that closing the achievement gap between special needs students and their general education peers is a top priority. Doing so, however, requires investing in additional resources for special education teachers and classrooms.

In 2011, the ten-year-long DOE ended the special education classroom supply fund, after American Recovery and Reinvestment Act revenue that had been used to subsidize the fund expired. The loss left schools scrambling for alternatives and SPED teachers unable to provide essential supplies for their students, including curricular materials, high-interest low Lexile books, hands-on materials to support mathematics learning, adaptive programs and supplies, community and life skills



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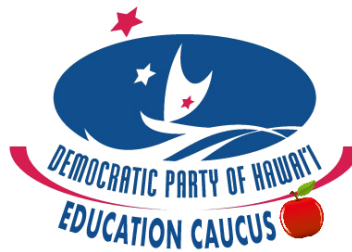
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developmental materials, and even paper for printing of individualized education plan forms, modified lessons, and related items.

Special education teachers need these additional funds for the unique needs for their students. No teacher should have to pay out of pocket for the needed instructional materials and equipment for their classroom.

We must provide a quality education to our special needs students and invest in the professional necessities of their instructors. To improve the achievement of our most vulnerable keiki, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.



SENATE BILL 392, SD 2, RELATING TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

MARCH 19, 2019 · HOUSE LOWER AND HIGHER
EDUCATION COMMITTEE · CHAIR REP. JUSTIN H.
WOODSON

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus supports SB 392, SD 2, relating to special education, which appropriates funds to the Department of Education to provide up to \$1,690 to each special education classroom teacher for instructional materials and equipment.

Hawai'i's special needs students deserve our help. For the 2017-2018 school year, the statewide achievement gap between high needs students—which includes SPED children, English language learners, and economically disadvantaged students—and non-high needs students was 32 percent for language arts and 28 percent for math. While State Superintendent Christina Kishimoto and the Hawai'i Board of Education have prioritized closing the achievement gap, doing so requires providing additional resources for SPED teachers.

In 2011, the Hawai'i State Department of Education discontinued the SPED classroom supply fund, which, for a decade, had given \$1,690 to every SPED teacher for curricular materials, high-interest low Lexile books, hands-on materials to support mathematics learning, adaptive programs and supplies, community and life skills developmental materials, and even paper for printing of individualized education plan forms. It would cost \$3,738,280 to provide the \$1,690 in supply funds to each of the state's 2,212 SPED teacher positions, which would be money well spent.

SB-392-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2019 8:59:43 PM

Testimony for LHE on 3/19/2019 2:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Erin Mendelson	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments:

SB392 SD2 – RELATING TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

Chair Woodson, Vice Chairs Hashem and Perruso, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB392, which would support students who require specially designed instruction to meet their unique needs. As a middle and elementary school special education teacher for 11 years, I have created and modified lessons using household items, free and purchased downloads from the internet, and all kinds of innovative materials and approaches. The grade level textbook is not adequate when students require a multi-sensory approach to understand and retain new concepts. I would often retype pages of a textbook to ensure access to grade level content at my students' reading level. It is a creative yet time consuming and often out-of-pocket endeavor to adapt content. Often, every student in a fully self-contained classroom (FSC) has a different curriculum tailored to their needs.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law that requires schools to serve the educational needs of eligible students with disabilities. Individual Education Programs (IEPs) guide the instruction and content that a special education teacher must provide. Students with disabilities may have programs that cover social skills, pre-vocational & vocational skills, communication, self-care, motor skills, recreation, academics and behavior. A special education teacher must design, implement, and progress monitor multiple curricular domains. Often, there is not funds to buy research based curriculum for each of these needs. In addition to specially designed instruction, students require or would benefit from specific equipment and assistive technology devices.

SB392 would improve the delivery of special education instruction. Teachers would have money to adapt the curriculum and provide technology based on students' needs. I strongly support the appropriation of funds to the Department of Education to provide up to \$1,690 to each special education classroom teacher for instructional materials and equipment.

Sincerely,

Erin Mendelson, Central District Student Support Resource Teacher

Testimony

TO: House Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
House Representative Amy A. Perruso, Vice Chair
House Committee on Lower & Higher Education

HEARING: Tuesday, March 19, 2019
2:20 PM
Conference Room 309

FROM: Jonathan Alexander, MSW Student at HPU, and Intern at HUGS Hawaii

RE: SB 392 SD2 – Relating to Special Education

Good afternoon and Aloha Mr. Chairman and Madame Vice Chairman. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jonathan Alexander and I strongly support SB 392 SD2.

As the parent of a child with special needs and a future Social Worker, I strongly support the additional \$1690 that would be provided to each special education classroom. My daughter is part of a complex special needs class at Ali'iolani Elementary School. The classroom has a head teacher, two nurses, multiple teacher aides, and Speech, Occupational, and Physical Therapists for the 4-6 children that are in her classroom at any given time. What is special about her classroom is how much it feels like a family. My daughter, who has complex special needs, is a typical child in this classroom. We receive art projects and activities that other children do such as Christmas trees, a girl's day art project, as well as participating in the spirit week events like the Dr. Seuss week where they wear different outfits every day. I can proudly say that the Hawaii DOE is steps ahead of other SPED departments I have been witness to on the Mainland. Not once have we been asked to provide additional materials other than her school supplies, however, these projects they do seem pretty elaborate in nature. Whether these funds are used to fund new

Durable Medical Equipment instead of fashioned old equipment, or additional supplies it would only prove to be a beneficial outcome. My daughter is nonverbal and has very little ways to communicate with us. The genuine excitement she shows when she understands she is getting ready for school exemplifies the classroom experience for her. This additional funding can only increase her happiness and relieve the stress of these educators to provide fun and exciting ways to help our children learn.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in strong support of SB 392 SD2.

SB-392-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/15/2019 2:38:07 PM

Testimony for LHE on 3/19/2019 2:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
cheryl	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

It probably seems to most that paying a special education teacher more is unfair. As a retired educator who often worked directly with teachers of students with special needs, it is my opinion that anything and everything we can do to support them with time and a monetary perk is great. I know that TIME is especially important but lacking that ever in education a \$\$ perk would be a boost of their pockets and morale. In my opinion, money well spent.

SB-392-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/18/2019 1:56:17 PM

Testimony for LHE on 3/19/2019 2:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Jennifer Howe	Individual	Support	No

Comments:



LATE

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

Date: 03/19/2019
Time: 02:20 PM
Location: 309
Committee: House Lower & Higher
Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB 0392, SD2 RELATING TO SPECIAL EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Appropriates funds to the Department of Education to provide up to \$1,690 to each special education classroom teacher for instructional materials and equipment. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD2)

Department's Position:

The Department of Education (Department) supports the intent of SB 0392, SD 2 appropriating funds for every special education classroom teacher to be provided up to \$1,690 for instructional materials and equipment that support student learning, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the Department's Board of Education-approved budget.

The intent of this bill aligns with Goals 1 and 2 of the Department's Strategic Plan in that the extra materials and equipment would help ensure student and staff success.

If SB 0392, SD 2 pass, the Department respectfully requests approximately \$4,000,000 be appropriated to carry out the purposes of this measure.

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

The Hawaii State Department of Education seeks to advance the goals of the Strategic Plan which is focused on student success, staff success, and successful systems of support. This is achieved through targeted work around three impact strategies: school design, student voice, and teacher collaboration. Detailed information is available at www.hawaiipublicschools.org.

Late Testimony

From: Raechelle Villanueva <rvillanueva@wailae.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, March 20, 2019 7:24 AM
Subject: LHE Hearing Testimony

Dear Lower and Higher Education Committee,

My name is Raechelle Villanueva and I am a third grade teacher at Wai'ala'e Public Charter School. I am testifying on behalf of SB 392 which appropriates funds to the Department of Education to provide up to \$1,690 to each special education classroom teacher for instructional materials and equipment. Currently, I am an inclusion teacher and I work closely with my SPED coteacher to service our students in the general education classroom setting. It has required a lot of time and resources to create a learning environment where all students thrive.

As a public charter school, we get less per pupil funding from the Legislature. As a result, teachers like myself, have taken upon ourselves to fund Professional Development and to fund materials/resources for our inclusion classroom. I am still wondering how support will be given to public charter schools in funding initiatives such as SB 392.

This year, I decided to take on VEX IQ competition robotics. It is our school's first year. We were able to secure a grant to fund the start up. As a result, I was able to house the competition mat, robots, and supplies in my third grade classroom. Programs like VEX IQ robotics are usually reserved for enrichment programs. However, all of my students, including my SPED students have access to these robots. I saw how enthused and motivated my students were to learn. This inspired me to pilot the use of more technology to promote career pathways in my third grade inclusion class. I purchased out of pocket, subscriptions to apps for video editing like Wevideo, tools like a Cricut which is an electronic cutter, microphones for videoing on Ipads, and more. We have a class Makerspace and built in Tinker Time in our daily schedule. Based on student interest, I have purchased materials and supplies for our class Makerspace out of pocket.

In addition, differentiation is needed to level the playing field and to close the learning gap. I have purchased math manipulatives out of pocket. To make math concrete, I purchased wood and paint for my students to apply their knowledge of fractions and measurement to build a bookshelf for our class. I spend thousands of dollars building a classroom leveled library that accommodates my wide range of learners.

Time is another resource. Planning with my coteacher as well as differentiating the work for my students takes additional hours. My family has gotten involved as well. My husband will go with me to the hardware store to help me buy supplies for projects. The hours researching on Amazon Prime for the best deals as well as finding other sources of funding through donations, takes time.

The results have been truly remarkable. I have seen my students improve in motivation and self-esteem. At Goal Sharing Conferences, a mother shared with me how she sees a difference in her child's self confidence. On my recent Tripod Survey, 100% of my students like the way they learn things in our class. When we talk of equitable access, I believe that all students are gifted and talented. SPED students run the range of medically fragile to Specific Learning Disabilities, ADHD, Autism Spectrum, and more. All of these SPED students deserve access to high quality materials and educational experiences. When we talk of equity, it does not always mean everyone getting the same thing. I think of equity as leveling the playing field. Our SPED students need more to level the playing field.

Investing in SPED students is investing in all of our students. For a future ready work force and for a better Hawaii, investing in our SPED students makes a statement that yes, we believe in them. A little goes a long way. Our SPED students deserve technology, computer science, coding, and career pathway learning experiences.

I was asked to put a rough estimate of the monetary value of the resources I have spent my own personal funds on. I would say by the end of the year, it would be close to \$5,000. With the average teacher salary being \$45,000 and Hawaii's high cost of living, it is really hard. More so at a public charter school where funding is even more tight, I find myself conflicted. Our children deserve the best, but I also have a family of my own to take care of. Additional funding from the Legislature to support SPED classrooms, including inclusion classrooms in not just the DOE, but in public charter schools would a a huge step in the right direction. Thank you very much for the opportunity to share my thoughts.

Sincerely,
Raechelle Villanueva

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Raechelle Villanueva | 3rd Grade Teacher
Wai'alae Elementary Public Charter School
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Late Testimony

From: Keil Oberlander <keil.oberlander@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 20, 2019 10:29 AM
To: hashem2 - Michael <hashem2@capitol.hawaii.gov>
Subject: Re: SB392 Testimony

When the House committee on Lower & Higher Education were discussing bill SB392 SD2, I was moved to testify in favor of it due to my experience as a special education teacher for the last three years. I believe that it is important to provide special education teachers with additional funding due to the importance of caring for our most vulnerable students. In my experience of teaching at two different high schools, I have noticed that my students who are in the resource setting (vs. inclusion and general education) have a significantly lower socio-economic status and very frequently have little to no school supplies. The students who have learning differences, particularly in Waianae, often see teachers come and go within a matter of one year due to the stresses of being a special education teacher in a high needs area. We are not provided with the funding to adequately provide for our students and ourselves the peace of mind knowing we are doing what is best for the keiki. In my second year as a speducator, I was a veteran in the department with almost all first year teachers with no special education background. I have learned through my study of the brain targeted teaching (BTT) that the environment is one of the most important aspects of a classroom, especially in an area . where poverty is abound. These students often come from homes that feel more dangerous and uncaring than a classroom, and so it has highlighted for me the importance of creating a classroom that is safe so that the students feel supported and ready to learn. I tell my students in the very beginning and all throughout: I care about you as a person first then student. If you are not ok as a person, it will be impossible for you to be ok as a student. Thus, I have went out of my way to buy my students supplies so that they are not ashamed of not having any. I have spent a lot of money on my classroom appearance because it does help--I have the most decorated room at my school and almost every teacher that comes by assumes first that it would be a distraction, that students would fall asleep because it's too cozy. I have encountered the opposite. I have never had students fall asleep, not even during the 15 minutes of silent reading we start each class with. My students are productive because I spent my own money creating the safe space for them so that they may learn. This is why I believe it is so important for special educators to receive additional funding, because our student with learning differences require stability and safety more than anyone else. If a special education teacher receives this funding, perhaps it can be an incentive to stay longer and not feel drained energetically and financially by the position. The position is a burden; not the students. This will not resolve the turnover rate, but it may help. Ultimately, this helps the students above all because then they have the tools necessary to learn and be successful. If we aren't doing this for our most vulnerable, then we are failing them.

Mahalo and aloha,
Keil Oberlander