



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

**Date:** 02/06/2020

**Time:** 02:10 PM

**Location:** 309

**Committee:** House Lower & Higher  
Education

**Department:** Education

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

**Title of Bill:** HB 2421, HD1 RELATING TO THE HAWAII SCHOOL FOR THE  
DEAF AND BLIND.

**Purpose of Bill:** Creates a board of trustees for the Hawaii school for the deaf and blind to establish an independent governance structure for the school. Takes effect 12/31/2059. (HD1)

**Department's Position:**

The Department of Education (Department) respectfully offers comments on HB 2421, HD1, requesting the Department to create a Board of Trustees for the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind (HSDB) in order to establish an independent governance structure for the school.

The Department is currently taking steps to improve and expand services to students who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind through the efforts of a designated workgroup. The workgroup was formed to develop an actionable plan that builds a statewide system of supports and services to meet the needs of all the Department's Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind students (which includes students who use American Sign Language [ASL], hearing aids, or cochlear implants). This workgroup includes representatives from various stakeholder groups, including representatives who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The Department applies the National Association of State Directors of Special Education's (NASDSE) Optimizing Outcomes for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing: Educational Service Guidelines (2018) in their development work. The workgroup is also looking at other state Deaf Education schools and systems as possible models. With the workgroup, the Department has formed collaborative partnerships with people who are knowledgeable in deaf education and fluent in ASL to help with decision-making. The workgroup is aimed at improving programs and services statewide where established, including at HSDB. In addition, HSDB will be going through a review process using the NASDSE criteria to examine current practices and receive recommendations from national experts for their academic and financial plan.

The Department has initiated a workplan to mitigate and repair the school facilities, in particular, the dorms and library, based on recent request by its principal.

The Department continues to put the needs of our students first and is committed to ensuring the academic achievement, safety and well-being of each and every student at HSDB.

The Hawai'i State Department of Education is committed to delivering on our promises to students, providing an equitable, excellent, and innovative learning environment in every school to engage and elevate our communities. 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](http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org).



Testimony for HB 2421  
Higher and Lower Education Committee

The Honorable Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair  
The Honorable Representative Mark J. Hashem, Vice Chair  
The Honorable Representative Sean Quinlan, Vice Chair

Re: HB 2421 – Relating to Hawai'i School for the Deaf and Blind

Dear Honorable Representative Justin H. Woodson,

My name is Brian Nakamoto and I am the president of Hawai'i School for the Deaf and the Blind (HSDB) Alumni Club. Our organization has more than 30 members and almost all of our members were the alumni of HSDB and its predecessors including, but not limited to, Diamond Head School for the Deaf and Statewide Center for Students with Hearing and Visual Impairments.

Our organization strongly support HB 2421 because we have foreseen our school going through its series of mismanagement by hearing principals assigned by our Department of Education.

It is unfortunate that our current Department of Education, does not have a clear understanding of how the bilingual-bicultural curriculum of American Sign Language and English work in our deaf school. They currently do not have a person with extensive expertise in bilingual-bicultural approach and a strong background of Deaf education that can steer our school in its right path.

We can compare our deaf school with that of Kula Kalapuni O Aneunue (Anuenue School) due to its immersion program in Hawaiian language. Our school has the immersion program in American Sign Language with strong emphasis of English as the essential second language to support our written expression and communication.

All of our school's students are exposed intensively in American Sign Language as the first language and English as the second language. It is essential to build foundations toward our deaf students' first language, which is American Sign Language. Once the foundations in American Sign Language are solidified, our students will excel in English as their second language, as proved by numerous researches done by linguists working within the Deaf education. However, our school is distinguished from the Anuenue School because our students are deaf, and we teach them by using the pedagogical approaches found in Deaf education. Those pedagogical approaches are completely different from those of the normalized pedagogical approaches found in general education settings with our hearing counterparts.

As you may wonder, if our Deaf education is truly similar or exactly the same as the special education, then why do we have many Deaf education programs being offered in many universities across our nation, including but not limited to, Gallaudet University, Boston University, Lamar University, and California State University, Northridge.

Hence, we do need a board of trustees consisting of individuals that have expertise in Deaf education. We need those people to help our school to be successful by providing the highest quality of instruction for our Deaf students. They do not deserve to be neglected by our Department of Education and they do not deserve to suffer from the mismanagement as well.

It is frustrating that we have to deal with Department of Education's poor decisions for our deaf school, as it grapples through different principals for the past decade, especially when we had a hearing principal who was evidently uncertain of what to do with our deaf students. We did have a deaf principal that worked with us from 2016 to 2019, we witnessed a golden age at HSDB. During that golden age, our school assembled its Robotics team, secured the spot as the co-host for West Regional Academic Bowl competition to be hosted here in Honolulu for the first time, saw significant increases in our students' academic performance levels, improved the morale among our students and staff, and many more. Up until August 2019, when we received a tragic news that the deaf principal was reassigned to another school and our school got a temporary-assigned principal on the loan from Kahala Elementary School. Again, a principal with lack of Deaf education. That has been going on in an evident cycle over the years, especially when we had Dr. Jane K. Fernandes, then Dr. Jeanne G. Prickett, then Mrs. Sydney Dickerson.

We need to step back and take a look at the minority group of students in our Department of Education. Those deaf students, we need to take them into consideration for their better future. In order to give them better quality of education through the bilingual-bicultural curriculum at HSDB, we need to have a principal with expertise in Deaf education and extensive comprehension of how bilingual-bicultural curriculum works. Therefore, we will need to establish a board of trustees that will include the individuals, both Deaf and hearing, with expertise or extensive experience in Deaf education, which will make better decisions for our school. As we have learned, the board of trustees will also include the DOE superintendent as an ex-officio member and we see that as a good sign, given that the superintendent can ensure that the decisions by the board are consistent with Board of Education policies.

Our organization are in strong favor of the HB 2421. Please take your time and consideration on this bill.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Aloha,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Nakamoto". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a stylized "Nakamoto".

Brian Nakamoto

President, HSDB Alumni Club

47-345 D Hui Iwa Street  
Kaneohe, HI 96744

February 6, 2020

The Honorable Justin H. Woodson  
Chair  
House Committee on Lower and Higher Education  
Hawaii State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street, Room 309  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Re: House Bill 2421, HD1 Relating to Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chairs, and members of the House Committee on Lower and Higher Education,

House Bill 2421, HD1 Relating to the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind (HSDB) establishes an independent and expertise-driven Board of Trustees at HSDB to ensure the educational needs of students who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind are met.

I am a member of the Deaf and Blind Task Force, and I strongly support this bill. Establishing an independent governing structure of people with expertise delineated in the bill will ensure that students who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind will have teachers and staff working with them who are fluent in American Sign Language, as well as being knowledgeable about appropriate and current educational methods and techniques in deaf education. At the core of this is the acquisition of a language that is understandable and culturally appropriate for children who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. As hearing people, we take language for granted because we learned language from our parents, family, and community on a daily basis. Language provides us with a cultural base and links people with a common language to each other. Imagine how your experience and development would have been different if you did not have the opportunity to learn language the way you did as a hearing person.

My first professional job was as a vocational evaluator with the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation on the mainland. I worked with deaf students who graduated or received a certificate instead of a diploma from a school for the deaf and blind, but they did not have adequate communication or educational skills to compete competitively for jobs in the local community. If HSDB had a governing board consisting of members as recommended in this bill, language acquisition and education will be available for students who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind and this inclusive environment will allow them to obtain jobs or attend college similar to hearing students who graduate from their community high schools.

This bill provides an excellent opportunity for HSDB to develop, educate, and maintain a learning environment that is one in which students who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind can learn and thrive. Please help us develop a learning environment that provides an optimal starting point by establishing an independent governing board that will allow HSDB to be a school that empowers and encourages this student population to reach their full potential.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,



Debra L. Jackson, M.S.  
Member  
Deaf and Blind Task Force

## hashem1 - Kenneth

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**From:** Eleanor Macdonald <elemacdonald8@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 4, 2020 8:46 PM  
**To:** LHEtestimony  
**Cc:** Roderick J. Macdonald; Rep. Mark Hashem; Rep. Sean Quinlan  
**Subject:** Testimony HB 2421 Relating to the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind

>> Rep. Justin Woodson  
Chair, Lower & Higher Education  
Hawaii State Capitol  
415 South Beretania St, Room 405  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Chairman Woodson and Members:

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>> Let me open my testimony by asking you a personal question: Hypothetically, would you enroll your deaf, hard of hearing or deaf-blind child in a school where faculty and staff were not academically trained to teach your keiki? Perhaps just as importantly, would you want them to attend a school administered and overseen by administrators who have zero background in Deaf education? I think your answer is "no."

>>

>> From a historical perspective, Mr. Santiago Agcaoili served as principal of the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind (HSDB) from 1969 to 1986. For 17 years, he administered this program without bothering to learn American Sign Language (ASL); he had little in the way of academic training in Deaf Education; yet he was the Principal. During these years, Deaf, hard of hearing and Deaf-Blind students' linguistic skills fell way behind their hearing peers.

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>> Then, in 1989 to 2003, Dr. Jane Fernandes and Dr. Jeanne Prickett, both fluent in ASL, and knowledgeable in the Bi-lingual Bi-cultural approach, widely accepted in Deaf education, administered the then Statewide Center for Students with Hearing and Visual Impairments and later renamed the Hawaii Center for the Deaf and the Blind (1995). These administrators reported directly to the DOE superintendent resulting in the students' academic growth flourishing and going onto colleges like their hearing peers.

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>> I know this because I was the supervisor of the Deaf Services Section and later Program Specialist in the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Department of Human Services (DHS) from 1998 to 2015, and I was personally involved in transitioning Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind youth into the adult service network. If found eligible, DVR covered for the student's cost of tuition, books and supplies for colleges here and at Gallaudet University or Rochester Institute of Technology on the mainland.

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>> In 2009, under the leadership of Sydney Dickerson, the school morphed again to become the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind (HSDB) and joined the DOE's Honolulu District, thus losing its autonomy.

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>> The HSDB went through a dark period from 2011 to 2016 when the next principal had NO Deaf education background, NO ASL skills and NO understanding of the Deaf or Deaf-Blind cultures. The students on campus languished until a principal trained in Deaf education and fluent in ASL was hired in 2016.

>>

>> This "ping-pong approach" is confusing to the parents statewide and punishes the Deaf, hard of hearing and Deaf-Blind student body. An expertise-driven Board of Trustees as described in this bill will over-see HSDB and provide the critically needed academic leadership for HSDB students to equally compete in society.

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>> Mahalo,  
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>> Eleanor Macdonald, M.Ed.  
>> Hawaii Association of the Deaf-Blind  
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## hashem2 - Michael

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**From:** Rod Macdonald <rjmacdonald@hawaiiintel.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 4, 2020 9:06 PM  
**To:** LHEtestimony  
**Cc:** rjmacdonald@hawaiiintel.net  
**Subject:** Testimony of R.J. Macdonald submitted to the House Committee on Lower and Higher Education - HB2421

Testimony of Roderick J. Macdonald

Submitted to the House Committee on Lower and Higher Education

Thursday, February 6, 2020, 2:10 pm  
House Conference Room 309  
Hawaii State Capitol

The Honorable Justin Woodson, chair  
The Honorable Mark Hashem, Vice Chair  
The Honorable Sean Quinlan, Vice Chair

Re: HB 2421 - Relating to the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind

Mr. Chairman, Members:

My name is Rod Macdonald. I am both deaf and blind, and I am submitting this testimony to strongly urge you to pass HB2421 to establish an independent, expertise-driven Board of Trustees to oversee and manage the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind (HSDB).

Here in Hawaii we look at the State Capitol as the focal point of our community. It is where programs and services for our community originate. It is where we look for solutions to our problems. It is the symbol of our community.

In a very similar and much more personal way, the HSDB is the symbol of the community within Hawaii of individuals with less-than-optimum hearing - Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind people. Our children were educated at this school; our community looks to this school for guidance, strength and continuing education. This school is not your usual Public School Number 123 - it is OUR SCHOOL, the one-and-only.

It is, therefore, immensely important to us that "OUR" school is managed, evaluated and overseen by educators who understand the bi-lingual, bi-cultural philosophy applicable to Deaf education in place at 3440 Leahi Avenue. It is emotionally important to us that this school be guided, overseen, directed and administered by individuals with expertise specific to the school's mission, rather than generic special education.

This is the purpose of HB2421 - to establish an independent Board of Trustees with expertise in the specialized subject matter that is HSDB. We look to have community representation, especially from parents with students at HSDB and graduates who have been educated there. We look to have a meaningful voice in the symbol of our community.

This approach has been tested successfully in other states. The Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind is administered in this manner, and is among the highest-achieving such schools in the country.



Please support HB2421, OUR COMMUNITY SCHOOL.

Thank you.

## hashem1 - Kenneth

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**From:** Angel Ramos <angelramos@me.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 5, 2020 1:02 PM  
**To:** LHEtestimony  
**Subject:** Please support HB 2421

I am sending you this email to request your support for **HB 2421, which will "Create a board of trustees for the Hawaii school for the Deaf and Blind to establish an independent governance structure for the school."** HB 2421 has 29 co-sponsors and recently passed (7-0-1) in the House Human Services & Homelessness committee. It passed with an amendment from the DOE AGs office. DOE did not oppose the bill. The Deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind and hearing community firmly support the bill. Additionally, in the editorial of the Star Advertiser (Feb. 4, 2020) the editors also endorsed this bill stating, "Given that the campus is unlike any other statewide, parting with standard public schools oversight seems a sensible move." Please support HB 2421 - it is not only a sensible move and extremely important for the education of our Deaf keiki, but also for their safety. For the past six months, the students residing at the school have had no overnight security putting their safety at risk. For the past six months, more than 50% of the emergency notification system on campus has been broken and the DOE continues to say "we will replace them." For the past six months, the male students in the dormitory have had to walk across campus every evening to take a shower because the showers in the dorm were not working. Six months! These safety and health issues are totally unacceptable and show DOE's flagrant neglect of the safety and wellbeing of HSDB students and staff. An independent HSDB board of trustees will ensure that the safety and wellbeing of HSDB students are always paramount. Please support HB 2421.

Mahalo

Angel M. Ramos, Ph.D.

**HB-2421-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/5/2020 1:49:37 AM

Testimony for LHE on 2/6/2020 2:10:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Eileen Chiwa	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am Eileen Chiwa. I am Deaf and retired from Federal Service. I attended Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind (HSDB) for three years before enrolling full-time at McKinley High School.

I am testifying because I am concerned about the future of the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and hard of hearing students. Having Deaf teachers or teachers who are hearing who are fluent in American Sign Language and have lots of knowledge and skills about Deaf Education and Deaf Culture would inspire them. They would empower them with learning skills; help them enhance their self-esteem; and help them realize their potential. My nephew is deaf and teaches at HSDB.

With the establishment of the HSDB Board of Trustees, if this bill passes, these people will ensure and provide the stable and secured yet high-quality educational environment for these Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and hard of hearing students now and in the future.

I wholeheartedly support the passage of

HB 2421 HD 1.

Thank you for your time to read my testimony.

Sincerely,

Eileen Chiwa

Mililani, HI

**HB-2421-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/5/2020 11:40:05 AM

Testimony for LHE on 2/6/2020 2:10:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Brian Nakamoto	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Representative Justin H. Woodson,

Aloha, my name is Brian Nakamoto and I reside in Pearl City. I also work as one of the teachers at Hawai'i School for the Deaf and the Blind (HSDB), as well as one of the alumni at that same school from 1990 to 1999 before I relocated to Southern California for my high school years.

I support House Bill 2421 because I have seen many negative impacts coming from an administration that lacks the expertise in Deaf education. We need an administrator with extensive knowledge and background of the Deaf education at our deaf school. By hiring the administrator with those qualifications will bring better changes to that school.

In order to be able to screen out and select the best candidate to work as an administrator at HSDB, the establishment of board of trustees is needed. With the board of trustees consisting of several Deaf individuals that have expertise in Deaf education will make better decisions for our deaf school, given that their decisions are pertinent with our Board of Education's policies.

Since I was a student at HSDB, I had two administrators with extensive background and knowledge in Deaf education, Dr. Jane K. Fernandes and Dr. Jeanne G. Prickett, both administrators brought many positive changes to our deaf school. For instance, Dr. Jane K. Fernandes established the preschool classroom at HSDB that admitted two of my good friends as the first students in its first preschool class. And Dr. Jeanne G. Prickett restored the school morale by expanding the needs for deaf-blind students by providing resources to these students that were unavailable in the past. Plus, Dr. Jeanne G. Prickett set the higher standard bar for our Deaf students as we entered the 21st Century by revising the curricula for most classes to make them more compatible with our Deaf students, distinguishing from the general education curricula.

I was aware that there was one more administrator, which later became principal when Hawai'i School for the Deaf and the Blind got its current name from its former name of "Hawai'i Center for the Deaf and the Blind" in July 2009, Mrs. Sydney Dickerson. Still, we had an administrator with expertise in Deaf education.

A hearing principal from within the DOE system was temporarily assigned to HSDB after its unfortunate incident in 2009, she remained for the next few years and then she went to become permanent for the next few years. During that timeframe when we had a hearing principal, at the same time when I was hired at HSDB, many of our teachers were uncertain of which curricula to follow, as those curricula we used to have were outdated, especially when we were facing with new standards such as Common Core State Standards for our reading, writing, language arts, and mathematics. Many teachers were lost and many students suffered from confusing instruction from teachers.

When HSDB received a deaf principal after many years of having a hearing principal, HSDB entered its golden age. During that golden age, we established our Robotics team, secured the spot as the co-host for West Regionals Academic Bowl competition to be hosted here in Honolulu for the first time, saw growth in our students' Lexile and measurement of academic performance levels across the core subjects, improved the morale among students and staff at HSDB, and many more.

Unfortunately, that deaf principal got reassigned to another school and we get another hearing principal, which lacked the same expertise that we desire for our school—the expertise in Deaf education. With our current hearing principal being temporarily assigned, she does not make any changes or improvements within our school because she wanted us to keep up with what we were doing when the deaf principal was running our school.

With that all said, with the possibility of hiring a deaf principal with extensive background and knowledge in Deaf education, we do need the board of trustees composed of many Deaf individuals with in-depth knowledge and extensive experience in Deaf education. If we establish that board, everything will change for our deaf school with better decisions and appropriate funding and resources to be given. That board of trustees will still incorporate our DOE superintendent as an ex-officio member.

I see this as a win-win-win situation for our deaf school, our Deaf community, and for our state's Department of Education. Our deaf keiki deserve the best Deaf education to prepare them to become self-efficient citizens in our State of Hawai'i, as well as our country. I know that this will make a tremendous impact on our current and future students because that will prepare them to be successful and sufficient to live on their own independently once they exit HSDB.

I strongly recommend you to take this into consideration for the future of HSDB and its impact to our deaf students. Once again, I support House Bill 2421.

Mahalo for your time and consideration. Aloha.

Brian Nakamoto  
Pearl City, Hawai'i  
High School Mathematics Teacher & High School Department Chair, HSDB  
Alumnus of HSDB, 1991-1999

**LATE**

**HB-2421-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/5/2020 6:39:48 PM

Testimony for LHE on 2/6/2020 2:10:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Darlene Ewan	Aloha State Association of the Deaf	Support	No

Comments:

**LATE**

**HB-2421-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/5/2020 6:40:36 PM

Testimony for LHE on 2/6/2020 2:10:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Darlene Ewan	Individual	Support	No

Comments:



**LATE**

**HB-2421-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/5/2020 8:38:56 PM

Testimony for LHE on 2/6/2020 2:10:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Jeffrey Temple Stabile, Jr.	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Jeff Stabile, a member of the faculty of the Upper School at HSDB. I support the establishment of a Board of Trustees consisting of a diverse number of representatives of the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Deaf-Tangential (children of Deaf people, parents of Deaf people, significant others of Deaf people, Siblings of Deaf people, etc.) and Deaf Education professionals as well as members of the Hawaii DOE community, a BoT that would provide oversight, a mechanism for meaningful exchange of information and input for decision-making, and spur consistent communication amongst those involved with HSDB.

For too long, Deaf individuals have not had a role in helping shape the educational institutions that are supposed to address their needs, and there has not been a mechanism or process in place for successful Deaf professionals to provide meaningful input that is acted on. Such involvement on a decision-making level is crucial for Deaf education institutions to appropriately serve their communities. This lack of meaningful representation must and should be replaced by a system of true and powerful representation.

On the converse side, there is a need for the BoT to also have strong representation from those fluent in the workings of the Hawaii DOE, so that students can benefit maximally from the knowledge and expertise of those who know how to get things done within the systems of the Department of Education and the Hawaii State Legislature.

Having a great group of people who are products of/immersed in/affirming of Deaf culture and American Sign Language is necessary, but not sufficient, to compose a Board of Trustees to serve deaf/Deaf students to the best degree possible. Having a great group of people who are conversant in the ways of the DOE and Hawaii government is necessary, but not sufficient, to compose a Board of Trustees to serve deaf/Deaf students to the best degree possible. Having a Board of Trustees composed of representatives from both these groups gives us the best chance to form a beneficial group that can help HSDB in its ongoing quest to be the best institution it can be, providing Deaf and deaf-becoming-Deaf students with education based on the combined best practices related to many and varied professionals and stakeholders.

**LATE**

**hashem2 - Michael**

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**From:** Jennifer Chiwa <jennifer.chiwa@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 6, 2020 3:04 AM  
**To:** LHEtestimony  
**Subject:** Testimony in Support of HB 2421 for Hearing on 02-06-2020 at 2:10 pm

Aloha, Members of the Committee on Lower and Higher Education.

Please support HB 2421 which would establish a board of trustees for the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind (HSDB). I have three sisters and a nephew who are deaf, all of whom attended HSDB. I think it would be beneficial for the students if HSDB had its own board of trustees who should have experience with and/or knowledge of deaf and blind people. These trustees would then understand the specific needs of HSDB students to thrive.

Mahalo.

Jennifer Chiwa

**LATE**

**hashem1 - Kenneth**

**From:** Eleanor Macdonald <elemacdonald8@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 4, 2020 8:46 PM  
**To:** LHEtestimony  
**Cc:** Roderick J. Macdonald; Rep. Mark Hashem; Rep. Sean Quinlan  
**Subject:** Testimony HB 2421 Relating to the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind

>> Rep. Justin Woodson  
Chair, Lower & Higher Education  
Hawaii State Capitol  
415 South Beretania St, Room 405  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Chairman Woodson and Members:

>>  
>> Let me open my testimony by asking you a personal question: Hypothetically, would you enroll your deaf, hard of hearing or deaf-blind child in a school where faculty and staff were not academically trained to teach your keiki? Perhaps just as importantly, would you want them to attend a school administered and overseen by administrators who have zero background in Deaf education? I think your answer is "no."  
>>  
>> From a historical perspective, Mr. Santiago Agcaoili served as principal of the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind (HSDB) from 1969 to 1986. For 17 years, he administered this program without bothering to learn American Sign Language (ASL); he had little in the way of academic training in Deaf Education; yet he was the Principal. During these years, Deaf, hard of hearing and Deaf-Blind students' linguistic skills fell way behind their hearing peers.  
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>> Then, in 1989 to 2003, Dr. Jane Fernandes and Dr. Jeanne Prickett, both fluent in ASL, and knowledgeable in the Bi-lingual Bi-cultural approach, widely accepted in Deaf education, administered the then Statewide Center for Students with Hearing and Visual Impairments and later renamed the Hawaii Center for the Deaf and the Blind (1995). These administrators reported directly to the DOE superintendent resulting in the students' academic growth flourishing and going onto colleges like their hearing peers.  
>>  
>> I know this because I was the supervisor of the Deaf Services Section and later Program Specialist in the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Department of Human Services (DHS) from 1998 to 2015, and I was personally involved in transitioning Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind youth into the adult service network. If found eligible, DVR covered for the student's cost of tuition, books and supplies for colleges here and at Gallaudet University or Rochester Institute of Technology on the mainland.  
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>> In 2009, under the leadership of Sydney Dickerson, the school morphed again to become the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind (HSDB) and joined the DOE's Honolulu District, thus losing its autonomy.  
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>> The HSDB went through a dark period from 2011 to 2016 when the next principal had NO Deaf education background, NO ASL skills and NO understanding of the Deaf or Deaf-Blind cultures. The students on campus languished until a principal trained in Deaf education and fluent in ASL was hired in 2016.  
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>> This "ping-pong approach" is confusing to the parents statewide and punishes the Deaf, hard of hearing and Deaf-Blind student body. An expertise-driven Board of Trustees as described in this bill will over-see HSDB and provide the critically needed academic leadership for HSDB students to equally compete in society.  
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>> Mahalo,  
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>> Eleanor Macdonald, M.Ed.  
>> Hawaii Association of the Deaf-Blind  
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## hashem1 - Kenneth

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**From:** Maile Paongo <mailepaongo@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 5, 2020 9:00 PM  
**To:** LHEtestimony  
**Cc:** Eleanor Macdonald  
**Subject:** Request a hearing for HB 2421

**LATE**

Representative Justin Woodson, Chair Committee on Lower & Higher Education  
415 Beretania Street, Room 405  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Woodson,

My name is Maile Paongo. I am in full support of House Bill 2421. I am an island girl and graduated from Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind in 1975. Currently, my nieces and nephews attend Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind. The youngest is a kindergarten student to eighth grade student.

I grew up mainly in an oral classroom at Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind. I used Hawaii Sign Language and American Sign Language in Deaf community. I was fortunate to know sign language because it kept happiness in my heart. Unfortunately, the Hawaii Department of Education continues to blind themselves with best pedagogies for Deaf children.

The Hawaii Department of Education will not provide you the truth. They will give you the icing on the cake and you will never see what it is like inside the cake until you listen to Deaf community, especially alumni like myself and others.

My father was raised in Niihau. He taught me a lot through simple signs. He spoke fluently in Hawaiian. He taught me to preserve my culture and heritage language. My nieces and nephews are very fortunate to learn about their heritage through our family who are Deaf and use sign language. My father taught me to keep Hawaii Sign Language and American Sign Language and share with my family members.

I have been part of Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind for more than 55 years. In the last few years, I have never seen a huge improvement. I am disappointed with the Hawaii Department of Education and Honolulu District Office for continuing to change the situations where things are going very well.

This is the reason why we need a board of trustees for the Hawaii school for the deaf and blind to establish an independent governance structure for the school. So we can run the school properly with the right people who are expert in Deaf Education and supports using Hawaii Sign Language and American Sign Language and written English.

Sincerely,  
Maile Paongo  
Honolulu, Hawaii

Sent from my iPhone

**LATE**

**LATE**

**HB-2421-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/6/2020 5:08:01 PM

Testimony for LHE on 2/6/2020 2:10:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Martin Hodapp	Disability Rights Hawaii	Support	No

**Comments:**

Disability Rights Hawaii supports the establishment of a governing board for the Hawai'i School for the Deaf and Blind.