



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

Date: 02/21/2020
Time: 11:00 AM
Location: 308
Committee: House Finance

Department: Education

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

Title of Bill: HB 2421, HD2 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 7/1/2050. (HD2)

Department's Position:

The Department of Education (Department) respectfully offers comments on HB 2421, HD2, 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. Through 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 established programs and services statewide, 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.

Additionally, the Department has initiated a workplan to mitigate and repair HSDB school

facilities, in particular, the dorms and library, based on recent request by its principal.

The Department is inclusive of all students, including low incidence population such as our Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind students. Student and family preference of communication modality is given the utmost consideration. As a result, the Department provides a variety of communication programs and services to address the individual needs of all students, whether they are attending a residential school such as HSDB or their school of attendance. Modes of communication include but are not limited to: ASL bilingual bimodal, Listening and Spoken Language, use of assistive technology such as a speech generating device, etc. The Department continues its commitment to the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind communities by making available a range of programs and services to students and their families.

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.

HB-2421-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2020 7:55:01 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2020 11:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

From: [David Simmons](#)
To: [FINtestimony](#)
Cc: hsdbsoar@gmail.com
Subject: Testimony to support HB2421 HD2
Date: Wednesday, February 19, 2020 7:18:48 PM

Representative Sylvia Luke
Chairwoman, Finance Committee
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street, Room 306
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

To Representative Luke and Members:

I am writing to strongly support HB 2421 HD2 to establish an expertise-driven Board of Trustees for the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind.

I am a resident in District 51 with friends and relatives who are deaf, hard of hearing or deaf-blind. The students attending the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind (HSDB) represent the future of Hawaii and whether these young people can get the kind of high quality education they need to get a well-paying job in society.

I remember the big writeup in the Star Advertiser in 2011 when a class action lawsuit against the Hawaii Department of Education for sexual assault on HSDB campus ended up costing taxpayers \$5.75M to settle this lawsuit.

I urge you to please call for a hearing for SB 2246 which will establish a statute for an expertise-driven Board of Trustees to provide operational oversight relating to the HSDB.

This is a very important bill that impacts the lives of keiki who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind.

Sincerely,

David Simmons



My native language is American Sign Language, while I am bilingual, you may notice English translation errors. Contact me if you have any questions or need clarification.



HB-2421-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2020 7:55:55 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2020 11:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Darlene Ewan	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

47-345 D Hui Iwa Street
Kaneohe, HI 96744

February 21, 2020

The Honorable Sylvia Luke
Chair
House Committee on Finance
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street, Room 308
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Re: House Bill 2421, HD2 Relating to Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind

Dear Chair Luke, Vice Chair Cullen, and members of the House Committee on Finance,

House Bill 2421, HD2 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

HB-2421-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2020 11:21:48 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2020 11:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
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 2.

Thank you for your time to read my testimony.

Sincerely,
Eileen Chiwa
Mililani, HI

HB-2421-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2020 7:49:38 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2020 11:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support. I was in the room and heard the testimonies of the various folks from the school. They need to have a board as well as a principal who understands their needs and concerns. This is so important to the continuing education goals for all students. For too long, this has not been equitable for them.

HB-2421-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2020 10:49:20 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2020 11:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Angel Ramos	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments:

It is imperative that the Hawai'i School for the Deaf and the Blind be managed by individuals who are knowledgeable about educating Deaf, hard of hearing and Deaf-Blind students and are passionate about providing for the education and safety of HSDB's students. As of this writing, the safety of students at HSDB is at risk. For example:

1. As part of the 2011 sexual abuse settlement, HSDB is supposed to provide overnight security on campus Sunday through Thursday to protect the residential students. Since August 2019, Honolulu District Office (HDO) has provided NO overnight security, putting the safety of HSDB's residential students at risk.
2. For the past three years, the emergency notification system on campus has been in need of repairs/replacement. Tired of waiting for DOE to fix/replace the system, the former principal purchased replacement parts last summer to repair the emergency notification system only to be told not to fix the system, that the state would replace it. That was 9 months ago and still nothing. This not only puts HSDB students at risk but also HSDB staff.
3. For 7 months male residential students had to walk across campus, each evening, to take a shower since the shower in the male residential building was broken. Said one student, "I feel like I am in prison walking with an escort each night to take a shower." It was just fixed this past few weeks as a result of making this know to legislatures.
4. Despite the need for overnight security, repairing/replacing the emergency notification system, and fixing the shower, DOE has been spending \$10,000 per month providing an interpreter to the temporarily assigned principal of HSDB who does not sign and is unable to communicate with students and staff without an interpreter. DOE is also spending another \$10,000 per month providing an interpreter to the former principal who was re-assigned to a hearing school. That is \$20,000 per month, \$140,000 as of today (7 months). By the end of the year, it will be \$200,000 on interpreting expenses that should be going to provide for the safety of HSDB students and staff.

Additionally, also as a result of the 2011 sexual abuse at HSDB, DOE is required to develop a plan to ensure that sexual predators and students with unacceptable sexual behavior are NOT enrolled at HSDB. In 2011, when the HSDB principal informed DOE

of a student who exhibited inappropriate sexual behavior, she was told that the student could not be transferred out of HSDB because where else could the student be educated? The principal kept the student at the school and the result was a sexual abuse scandal that took years for HSDB to recover from. In 2019, once again a student who exhibited inappropriate sexual behavior with female students was enrolled and resided in the dormitory. Once again the principal told DOE that the student needed to be transferred out of HSDB. Once again DOE objected, with the principal being told that it was not a good idea because where else could the student be educated? The principal, however, called for an IEP meeting and the parents decided to transfer their child back to their local school district, saving the school from another potential sexual abuse scandal.

Not only has DOE ignored the safety needs of HSDB students, DOE has also ignored Deaf stakeholders. For example, HDO created a workgroup to discuss how to improve the education of Deaf and hard of hearing people. NO Deaf stakeholder was invited to the first four meetings - none. Not even the principal of HSDB who has 40+ years experience in the field of education for Deaf and hard of hearing students was invited. It was only after Deaf and hearing stakeholders met with Deputy Superintendent Unebasami and shared their concerns that they were invited to the workgroup. For the 5th and 6th meeting, Deaf and hearing stakeholders were present in the workgroup as tokens. They were not included in developing the agenda, just told what to do. This is the mentality of DOE administrators who administer HSDB. It is a mentality of audism and oppression, that they know what is best for Deaf students. Can you imagine such a scenario occurring if a workgroup was established to discuss Hawai'ian education and no Hawai'ian people were invited?

Please support HB 2421. A Board of Trustees will ensure that decisions that affect the education and well-being of HSDB's students are made by individuals who are knowledgeable about educating Deaf, hard of hearing and Deaf-Blind students, and passionate about their safety and education. Mahalo.

finance8 - Joy

From: Cheryl Mizusawa <damizu@me.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2020 10:47 PM
To: FINtestimony
Subject: Strong support of HB2421 HD2

Representative Sylvia Luke
Chairwoman, Finance Committee
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street, Room 306
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

To Representative Luke and Members:

I am writing to strongly support HB 2421 HD2 to establish an expertise-driven Board of Trustees for the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind.

Sincerely,
Cheryl Mizusawa
Sent from iPhone

From: Rod Macdonald <rjmacdonald@hawaiiantel.net>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2020 8:59 PM
To: FINtestimony
Subject: Testimony of R.J. Macdonald submitted to the House Committee on Finance, Re: HB2421 HD2

Testimony of Roderick J. Macdonald

Submitted to the House Committee on Finance

Friday, February 21, 2020, 11:00 am
House Conference Room 308
Hawaii State Capitol

The Honorable Sylvia Luke, chair

Re: HB2421 HD2 - Relating to the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind

Madam Chair, 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 HD2, OUR COMMUNITY SCHOOL.

Thank you.

finance8 - Joy

From: Eleanor Macdonald <elemacdonald8@icloud.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2020 8:38 PM
To: FINtestimony
Cc: Roderick J. Macdonald
Subject: HB 2421 HD2 Relating to the Hawaii School for the Deaf & Blind

Representative Sylvia Luke
Chairwoman, Finance Committee
415 South Beretania Street, Room 306
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Representative Luke and Members,

I strongly support the independent governance of the Hawaii School for the Deaf & Blind (HSDB) with an expertise-driven Board of Trustees appointed by the Governor. Unlike all other schools within DOE, the HSDB requires the fluency of American Sign Language (ASL) to teach all academic subjects in a culturally appropriate respectful manner.

Keiki who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind deserves the highest quality education to prepare them for a successful career in this Age of Technology. Please don't leave our children behind their hearing peers.

I urge you to pass HB 2421 HD2.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Macdonald, M.Ed.

finance8 - Joy

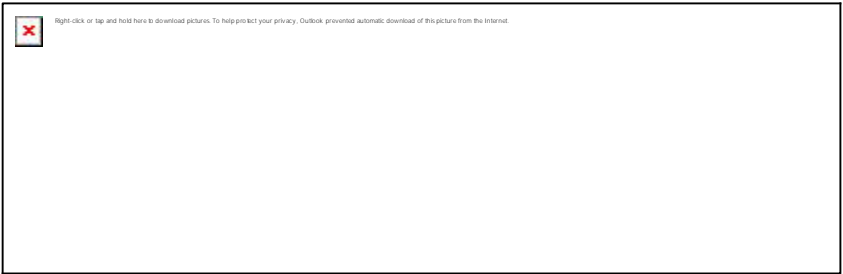
From: Rajarajeshwari <rajarajeshwari@deafhoodyoga.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 20, 2020 11:35 AM
To: FINtestimony
Subject: Support for HB 2421 HD2

Representative Sylvia Luke
Chairwoman, Finance Committee
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street, Room 306
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

To Representative Luke and Members:

I am writing to strongly support HB 2421 HD2 to establish an expertise- driven Board of Trustees for the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind.

Sincerely,
Kristen "Rajarajeshwari" Weiner



From: [Florence Rapozo](#)
To: [FINtestimony](#)
Subject: SUPPORT HB 2421 HD2
Date: Thursday, February 20, 2020 3:20:36 PM

Representative Sylvia Luke
Chairwoman, Finance Committee
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Room 306
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

To Representative Luke and Members:

I am writing to strongly support HB 2421 HD2 to establish an expertise-driven Board of Trustees for the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind.

Sincerely,
Florence G. Rapozo

From: [Samantha Hoeg](#)
To: [FINtestimony](#)
Subject: Please pass HS 2421 HD2
Date: Thursday, February 20, 2020 4:25:39 PM

To Representative Luke and Members:

I am writing to strongly support HB 2421 HD2 to establish an expertise-driven Board of Trustees for the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind.

After working with both hearing special needs children and Deaf children, it is overwhelmingly apparent that the teaching styles, as well as the very modality used to communication is completely different in almost every way.. Deaf children have needs that only those fluent in their language and are also experts in their cultural and social aspects, can provide. They should not be compared to hearing or hearing special needs students.

Sincerely,

Samantha Hoeg

All the best, Sammy H.

From: [Delia Lozano](#)
To: [FINtestimony](#)
Subject: HB 2421 HD2
Date: Thursday, February 20, 2020 4:13:51 PM

Representative Sylvia Luke
Chairwoman, Finance Committee
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street, Room 306
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

To Representative Luke and Members:

I am writing to strongly support HB 2421 HD2 to establish an expertise-driven Board of Trustees for the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind.

Sincerely,
Delia Lozano

--

Delia

* Live, Learn, Laugh, Love, Life *

Representative Sylvia Luke
Chairwoman, Finance Committee
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street, Room 306
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

To Representative Luke and Members:

Colleen Cidade, I am writing to strongly support HB 2421 HD2 to establish an expertise-driven Board of Trustees for the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind.

Sincerely,

Colleen Cidade
Honolulu, 96826



From: [Isabel Mejia Ramos](#)
To: [FINtestimony](#)
Subject: HB 2421
Date: Thursday, February 20, 2020 9:40:54 PM

You can just say:

I strongly support passage of HB 2421 HD2 for HSDB.

Isabel Mejia Ramos

Sent from my iPhone