

STATE OF HAWAII
HAWAII TEACHER STANDARDS BOARD
650 IWILEI ROAD, SUITE 201
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96817

March 16, 2020

TO THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

**TESTIMONY ON SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 5 , REQUESTING THE HAWAII
TEACHER STANDARDS BOARD TO ACCEPT THE NATIONAL ORIENTATION AND
MOBILITY CERTIFICATION FOR TEACHERS PROVIDING ORIENTATION AND
MOBILITY SERVICES**

SUBMITTED BY LYNN HAMMONDS FOR THE HAWAII TEACHER STANDARDS BOARD

Chairs Kidani and Ruderman, Vice Chairs Kim and Rhoads, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Human Services:

The Hawaii Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) thanks both committees for introducing and hearing this resolution to support Hawaii P-12 students needing orientation and mobility services of cane travel. HTSB would like to provide information to the Committees on recent action taken to incorporate the National Orientation and Mobility Certification (NOMC) as an option for teachers to add the field of Special Education Orientation and Mobility to their Hawaii license.

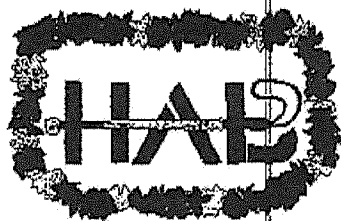
At their March 6, 2020, business meeting, the HTSB approved the use of the NOMC certificate to add the field of Special Education Orientation and Mobility to an existing Hawaii Special Education License. The NOMC is authorized by the National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB), which offers this certificate in two delivery formats: a higher education based program and an agency apprenticeship. No Hawaii college of university is a provider for this program.

However, training for the NOMC agency apprenticeship is offered in Hawaii by the Ho`opono Services for the Blind Orientation Center, a branch of the Department of Human Services (DHS) Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). Individuals with at least a high school diploma may enroll in this program and may work in a variety of settings, including but not limited to P-12 schools.

The HTSB specified that the NOMC orientation and mobility certificate be used to add a field to an existing special education teaching license because the NOMC certificate itself is not training specifically for teachers.

HTSB's new policy allows any individual who already holds a Special Education license in Hawaii to add the orientation and mobility field since they are already teacher trained and the NOMC will provide specific content knowledge and skills in providing cane travel to P-12 students.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



HAWAII ASSOCIATION OF THE BLIND (HAB)

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Senator Russell E. Ruderman, Chair, Senate Committee on Human Services
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair, Senate Committee on Education
State Capitol
Conference Room 16
415 S. Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

LATE

RE: Testimony in opposition of SCR5/SR4 March 16, 2020

Honorable Chairs and Committee Members,

My name is Donald Thomson, Legislative Co-Chair of the Hawaii Association of the Blind opposition of SCR5/SR4.

The Hawaii Association of the Blind strongly opposes SCR5/SR4. This resolution will allow semi-qualified people to serve in a capacity where real professionals are required. The present group of teachers who work for the DOE as teachers of the blind are dedicated people, who have gone through all of the necessary coursework and passed with flying colors. They have shown through their practicum work that they have met the qualifications to become teachers of the blind. The dedication to go throughout this whole process indicates a willingness to serve the students properly in a career which not only teaches academic skills, but further, teaches life skills.

To bring in people to serve in the same capacity as our present teachers is not only an insult to the teachers but implies a blatant disregard for the welfare of the blind students.

There is no room for semi-qualified people who not only do not possess all of the necessary skills to carry out the tasks expected as teachers of the blind but they have not shown the interest to go thru the process which would make them qualified for such important work.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition of SCR5/SR4.

"Advocating independence, equality and opportunity"

SCR-5

Submitted on: 3/13/2020 8:09:04 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2020 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Hope Hatakenaka	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments:

I am writing in opposition to Senate Resolution No. 4: Requesting the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board on Orientation and Mobility to Accept the National Orientation in Mobility Certification for Teachers Providing Orientation and Mobility services. In Hawaii DOE, teachers need to have teaching credentials to become a Teacher of the Visually Impaired (to teach students braille, low vision devices, etc.) and also to become an Orientation and Mobility instructor (to teach students navigation and white cane skills). Orientation and Mobility instructors in Hawaii DOE must complete a college program to receive their credentials and cannot be hired unless they are also certified as teachers. I am dual certified as a Teacher of the Visually Impaired, with advanced teaching credentials, and as an Orientation and Mobility instructor, with an advanced college certification. National certification, through the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP) or National Orientation and Mobility Certification (NOMC, as outlined in the resolution) is not a requirement.

An individual who holds a NOMC certification is not required to hold teaching credentials and should not be able to become a licensed teacher in Hawaii based solely on their NOMC certification. Being an Orientation and Mobility instructor for school-aged children requires a good knowledge base of child development, in order to plan and create lessons appropriate to the student's age and appropriate developmental level. Teachers do not approach teaching preschool children in the same manner as they would in teaching a high schooler or adult because they are at different cognitive, motor, social, and maturity levels.

NOMC promotes a technique called structured discovery. Using structured discovery with a student appears to be a positive method, as it utilizes problem solving techniques for the student to figure out where he/she is and how to navigate to the desired location. However, another aspect of structured discovery is to allow the student to navigate from an unknown drop off to a desired location, with no intervention from the instructor. While this technique may be used with a high school student after instruction and practice of foundational skills in a carefully designed order, this method would not be appropriate to use with a preschool student. I have had an individual with NOMC certification come to one of my meetings and try to push for the structured discovery methodology to be used with a preschool student. This is not appropriate. Please do not allow the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board to accept the NOMC certification in order to provide Orientation and Mobility services.

SCR-5

Submitted on: 3/14/2020 7:20:37 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2020 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Stacie Fong	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Hi! I'm a parent of a blind 1st grader at Waikiki Elementary and I cannot express how much this needs to be implemented in our current education system! When my daughter was just transitioning to preschool, I had an independent assessment by an NOMC certified structure and discovery teacher done for her to best shape her IEP. It only made the most sense to me at the time to look to the "experts" who were blind themselves. Who better than them to educate my daughter on what skills she will need in life to get around in the way only they know best?

Please join me in supporting this bill, really keeping the best interest of blind children like my daughter at the forefront of her educational needs.

SCR-5

Submitted on: 3/15/2020 7:29:01 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2020 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Shellford Cantan	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments:

SCR-5

Submitted on: 3/15/2020 8:33:46 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2020 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
james gashel	Testifying for national federation of the blind of hawaii	Support	Yes

Comments:

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND OF HAWAII

Testimony Before The Senate Committee on Human Services (HMS) and the Senate Committee on Education (EDU)

State of Hawaii

Thirtieth Legislature

Regular Session of 2020

March 16, 2020, 3:00 PM hearing on SCR5 / SR4

Good afternoon committee chairs, vice chairs, and members. My name is James Gashel. I am a resident of Honolulu and live at 2801 Coconut Avenue.

I am testifying today on behalf of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) of Hawaii, asking for your affirmative vote to pass these resolutions; SCR5 / SR4. These are identical resolutions to ask the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board to accept (or recognize) the National Orientation and Mobility Certification (NOMC) as a professional qualification for teachers of the blind and visually impaired here in Hawaii.

NOMC is a credentialing process administered by the National Blindness Professional Certification Board. Aside from NOMC, the other credential available is called Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist, or COMS, administered by the Academy for

Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals. At present the Department of Education here in Hawaii recognizes COMS but not NOMC.

In asking you to pass SCR5 / SR4, the principle we are following here is inclusion, not exclusion. In short, we are not asking you to pick sides between NOMC and COMS. All we are asking is for the Teacher Standards Board to consider recognizing teachers and teacher candidates who possess either the NOMC or the COMS credential. At this point I should note that recognizing both NOMC and COMS is consistent with the policy of the Department of Human Services (DHS). Consequently, instructors or applicants for employment with DHS and the Services for the Blind branch called Ho'opono may hold either credential.

Others who will testify will explain the differences between NOMC and COMS, but the point is, we are not asking the state to choose; just allow both. Perhaps the best way to understand the difference would be just to look at the names of the organizations that administer the certificates.

In the case of NOMC, that certificate is awarded by the National Blindness Professional Certification Board. If you look at their website you find they don't hesitate to use the word "blind." The training methods they emphasize are referred to as "non-visual." In other words, teachers holding the NOMC credential can be expected to train their students to function effectively and efficiently without using any vision whatsoever.

On the other hand, the organization that awards the COMS credential is called Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals, carefully avoiding use of the word blind. This will be obvious if you search and compare its website. Note the use of the term "vision rehabilitation," or "vision education;" not "blindness education." The difference, emphasizing vision over blindness, is more than just a difference in terminology. Teachers who hold the COMS credential can be expected to emphasize use of a students remaining vision in preference to teaching non-visual methods as compared to teachers who have the NOMC credential.

Aside from the difference in approach, emphasizing vision or blindness, you should not that failure by the state to recognize NOMC also tends to screen out blind people from being employed as teachers of blind or visually impaired students. In our experience this is so because most teachers who hold the COMS credential are people who can

see, whereas NOMC is absolutely wide open to full acceptance of the blind. Consequently, exclusion of NOMC professionals has made it far less likely that qualified teachers who are blind will be employed in Hawaii to teach blind students.

If you pass these resolutions you don't need to take or express a position on which approach, "vision education," or "blindness education," is best. Our ask is, just don't exclude "blindness education." That is the point of these resolutions. Many states acknowledge and accept both approaches, as shown in the example from Louisiana attached.

Mahalo for bringing these resolutions to a hearing and for your kind attention to the issues they raise.

Louisiana rule

Chapter 4. Ancillary School Service Certificates

§410 Orientation and Mobility

A. Orientation and Mobility—Valid as long as holder maintains current licensure

1. Eligibility requirements:

a. Bachelor's or Master's degree with concentration in orientation and mobility earned at a regionally accredited college or university.

b. licensure issued by the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation & Educational Professionals (COMS); or

c. licensure issued by the National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NOMC).

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 17:6 (A)(10), (11), (15); R.S. 17:7(6); R.S. 17:10; R.S. 17:22(6); R.S. 17:391.1-391.10; R.S. 17:411.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Promulgated by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, LR 32:1811 (October 2006), amended LR 34:433 (March 2008).

My name is Michell Gip and I have been blind since I was 10 years old. Growing up, I received adequate services and opportunities throughout the education system. My family tried to have high expectations for me regardless of my lack of vision. This led me to reach my full potential and not let blindness become a barrier for me as I strive toward my goals. I learned that not all blind and visually impaired students are given these same opportunities. It is my hope that future generations of blind and visually impaired students receive appropriate services and education; therefore, after completing my undergraduate degree, I went into the education field.

In 2016, I was completing my degree at Louisiana Tech University to become a Teacher of Blind Students (TBS) along with my National Certification in Unified English Braille (NCUEB) and National Orientation and Mobility Certification (NOMC); I learned about the opportunities in the Hawaii Department of Education. An online application portal was used to submit the application. With some accessibility barriers, I managed to successfully submit my application.

After a few weeks, I did not hear anything back from the Hawaii Department of Education. With several attempts to follow up, no one seemed certain as to who the point of contact should be. Eventually I got in contact with Stuart Kim. After several phone discussions, I was told that my application would be processed and reviewed. I continued to diligently follow up on the opportunity.

After a month or so, I was informed that the Hawaii Department of Education would not accept a candidate with my degree or certification. I spent time explaining our philosophy and methodology of structured discovery teaching and its benefits. I was told that may work for adults, but not for children. I proceeded to inform them of how structured discovery is beneficial for everyone, including children. I offered to provide examples of other states that were accepting NOMCs or literature to help explain the certification, but it was quickly dismissed. I was told that NOMCs were not being accepted and only a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) certification was accepted. Terms such as “unsafe” or “dangerous” for our blind and visually impaired students were referenced during our conversations.

This news was disappointing for me, since I was eager to be given an opportunity in the Hawaii Department of Education. I wanted to be a role model for those students and empower them to live the life they want regardless of their degree of vision.

Since I was not given an opportunity at the Hawaii Department of Education, in 2017, I accepted a position at BLIND, Inc. as their Youth Services Coordinator located in Minneapolis, Minnesota. While at BLIND, Inc., I have been able to work with students from all over the state and country to ensure that blind and visually impaired students are able to get the skills they need to stay competitive with their sighted peers.

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND OF HAWAII

Testimony Before The Senate Committee on Human Services (HMS) and the Senate Committee on Education (EDU)

State of Hawaii

Thirtieth Legislature

Regular Session of 2020

March 16, 2020, 3:00 PM hearing on SCR5 / SR4

Aloha committee chairs, vice chairs, and members. My name is Katie Keim. I am a resident of Honolulu and live at 2943 Kalakaua Avenue.

I am a blind individual and member of The National Federation of the Blind Of Hawaii. I am in support of and asking for your vote in passing these resolutions; SCR5 / SR4.

In 1995 at the age of 36 as a fully sighted individual, I became blind. My own life's experiences to that point included a good public school education, a variety of experiences and travel from my father's work which continued into adulthood with a successful career and personal life. My Structured Discovery Method blindness training, which NOMC is based on, gave me confidence to continue to reach for my dreams and aspirations fully engaged in life again.

For 20 years, I have been an advocate for parents of blind children and blind children themselves. I have volunteered in IEP DOE meetings with parents and their children, summer youth work and wilderness programs and 1 on 1 mentorships with families and their blind kids to support their dreams and give opportunity where none might have been before.

Early in my reentry into professional life, I was asked by the Hawaii Department of Education to evaluate DOE testing material that had visual recognition. The DOE was uncertain how to have their blind high school students take and pass the section on visual recognition prior to graduation. They hired me to translate that section to enable blind youth to understand visual recognition, pass the test and graduate from high school. Interestingly enough, having been fully sighted, I understood concepts of visual recognition, yet the questions on the test did not actually have much to do with vision. Why all children wouldn't know the questions prior to graduation from high school let alone why a blind child would not know them as well dumbfounded me. I undertook the challenge. From that experience, I transitioned into my advocating for and with parents of blind children as well as mentoring blind children themselves. It was obvious to me as I evaluated the blindness skill education and testing system for our blind youth, that something was lacking.

While working with many parents and their children who are blind, knowing how to participate in PE classes instead of being exempted by the mere fact they were blind, marching instead of naturally walking or running, daily skills with safe training tips, i.e. carving a pumpkin alongside your classmates for Halloween, not tie their shoes, walk to class and back again from the restroom, cafeteria, get in line or play with everyone else during recess, whether in preschool learning these skills or high school already engaged with their peers in activities, why are they

not learning independent concepts from the beginning with their cane as a tool of pride not shame?

What child does not learn these concepts who is not blind? they are expected to learn to find their own cubby hole, locker, school books and tools and learn respect, responsibility and accountability of self.

With the NOMC Structure Discovery method being available for students and parents during their IEP's, it can be added in alongside their learning giving our blind child the ability to be better equipped to keep up with their peers and have the same opportunities for higher education, for work and life.

many of the same students I worked with as teenagers ended up having to have immersion blindness skills training as young adults prior to being able to confidently and successfully navigate college and jobs. Some are still less confident and able because they were not started with these skills as early as preschool.

These examples are true disability that is uncalled for when proven methods can open their individuality, exploration, creativity, curiosity and ultimate opportunity then and later in life.

NOMC structured discovery methods in all phases of a blind child's education can make the difference in the success they lead in their lives later as teenagers, young adults in higher education leading them to career opportunities limitlessly.

I am horrified each time I am in an IEP for a blind child and hear the misperceptions that are limiting skills being suggested to the parent as a good education for their blind child. Why not give our children by passing these resolutions, the opportunity for a second and other professional certification in blindness education to enrich their lives more fully?

Every child has the right to their world being an open book of possibility, but without opportunity to learn and engage in their own spatial and childlike curiosity how can they ever achieve? NOMC structured discovery opens them up for that child's curiosity so important to their learning and much more.

As you vote on these important resolutions, Please seriously consider what you want and would want for your child regardless of their being able to see or not and pass these 2 identical resolutions to ask the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board to accept (or recognize) the National Orientation and Mobility Certification (NOMC) as a second professional qualification for teachers of the blind and visually impaired here in Hawaii.

Mahalo for your bringing these resolutions to a hearing and your kokua to the issues they raise.

Brandon G. Young

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Testimony Before the Senate Committee on Human Services (HMS) and the Senate Committee on Education (EDU)

State of Hawaii

Thirtieth Legislature

Regular Session of 2020

March 16, 2020, 3:00 PM hearing on SCR5 / SR4

Good afternoon Chairs and Vice Chairs of this Committee,

My name is Brandon Young and I live at 980 Maunawili Rd. on the island of Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of the resolution at present. I believe that all who are qualified in this area of blindness training should be able to teach students under the Department of Education in Hawaii and this should include blind persons as well.

I am writing to support the inclusion of the usage of the National Orientation and Mobility Certification (NOMC), as a certificate to teach in the Department of Education here in Hawaii. Currently, the only certification that is recognized to teach orientation and mobility under the Department of Education is the Certificate of Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS). In order to be certified under the COMS certification, you must be able to monitor a student from up to a certain distance away. This is impossible for a blind person to monitor a student using vision. This is why blind people have been unable to obtain this certification.

I want to let you know that I am a blind person and I grew up in the Department of Education system here and was taught by those with the COMS certification. I also received training at the Louisiana Center for the Blind where my instructors were certified from the National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB), and were taught to teach orientation and mobility with the skills of blindness. These teachers were taught to monitor their students non visually. When I was in the school system, I was taught by those known as Visual

Itinerant Teachers. These teachers wanted me to use my vision and taught me with the use of a short folding cane. The short folding cane catches on many objects and does not allow for echo location and other auditory feedback. When I was taught at the Louisiana Center for the Blind, I was taught to use the long white cane. This cane is long and has a metal tip on it. I was able to use the length of the cane to increase my walking speed and to find objects quicker and had more information to make decisions on what those objects in front of me were. The metal tip allowed me to use auditory cues to tell where doors or buildings were. This method was not taught when I was in the school system here in Hawaii.

I hope that you can tell by my testimony that there are many benefits by allowing those who teach and hold a certification in the National Orientation and Mobility Certification (NOMC) field. I believe that the use of this certification would yield more teachers here in Hawaii and would lead to greater training for those who are blind in the state of Hawaii. I want to again thank you for taking the time to hear this resolution and for considering it for passage.

Mahalo and Aloha

Brandon G. Young

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND OF HAWAII

LATE

Testimony Before The Senate Committee on Human Services (HMS) and the Senate Committee on Education (EDU)

State of Hawaii

Thirtieth Legislature

Regular Session of 2020

March 16, 2020, 3:00 PM hearing on SCR5 / SR4

Good afternoon committee chairs, vice chairs, and members. My name is Michael Norton I am a resident of Honolulu and live at 3071 Paulei Circle. I am the parent of a 6 year old totally blind little girl, Eliana and support all measures to help and assist any and all in need of services to improve their lives and abilities.

I am testifying today on behalf of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) of Hawaii, asking for your affirmative vote to pass these resolutions; SCR5 / SR4. These are identical resolutions to ask the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board to accept (or recognize) the National Orientation and Mobility Certification (NOMC) as a professional qualification for teachers of the blind and visually impaired here in Hawaii.

NOMC is a credentialing process administered by the National Blindness Professional Certification Board. Aside from NOMC, the other credential available is called Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist, or COMS, administered by the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals. At present the Department of Education here in Hawaii recognizes COMS but not NOMC.

In asking you to pass SCR5 / SR4, the principle we are following here is inclusion, not exclusion. In short, we are not asking you to pick sides between NOMC and COMS. All we are asking is for the Teacher Standards Board to consider recognizing teachers and teacher candidates who possess either the NOMC or the COMS credential. At this point I should note that recognizing both NOMC and COMS is consistent with the policy of the Department of Human Services (DHS). Consequently, instructors or applicants for employment with DHS and the Services for the Blind branch called Ho'opono may hold either credential.

Others who will testify will explain the differences between NOMC and COMS, but the point is, we are not asking the state to choose; just allow both. Perhaps the best way to understand the difference would be just to look at the names of the organizations that administer the certificates.

In the case of NOMC, that certificate is awarded by the National Blindness Professional Certification Board. If you look at their website you find they don't hesitate to use the word "blind." The training methods they emphasize are referred to as "non-visual." In other words, teachers holding the NOMC credential can be expected to train their students to function effectively and efficiently without using any vision whatsoever.

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Aside from the difference in approach, emphasizing vision or blindness, you should no that failure by the state to recognize NOMC also tends to screen out blind people from being employed as teachers of blind or visually impaired students. In our experience this is so because most teachers who hold the COMS credential are people who can see, whereas NOMC is absolutely wide open to full acceptance of the blind. Consequently, exclusion of NOMC professionals has made it far less likely that qualified teachers who are blind will be employed in Hawaii to teach blind students.

If you pass these resolutions you don't need to take or express a position on which approach, "vision education," or "blindness education," is best. Our ask is, just don't exclude "blindness education." That is the point of these resolutions. Many states acknowledge and accept both approaches, as shown in the example from Louisiana attached.

Mahalo for bringing these resolutions to a hearing and for your kind attention to the issues they raise.

Louisiana rule

Chapter 4. Ancillary School Service Certificates

§410 Orientation and Mobility

A. Orientation and Mobility—Valid as long as holder maintains current licensure

1. Eligibility requirements:

- a. Bachelor's or Master's degree with concentration in orientation and mobility earned at a regionally accredited college or university.
- b. licensure issued by the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation & Educational Professionals (COMS); or
- c. licensure issued by the National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NOMC).

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 17:6 (A)(10), (11), (15); R.S. 17:7(6); R.S. 17:10; R.S. 17:22(6); R.S. 17:391.1-391.10; R.S. 17:411.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Promulgated by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, LR 32:1811 (October 2006), amended LR 34:433 (March 2008).

LATE

SCR-5

Submitted on: 3/15/2020 7:33:43 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2020 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Justin Salisbury	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha, Chairs Kidani and Ruderman, and Members of the Committees:

Mahalo for bringing these resolutions to a hearing. I am hopeful that we can eventually have these resolutions adopted by the full Senate and find the House concurring. I am delighted to know that my friends Shellford Cantan, Dean Georgiev, Katie Keim, and Jim Gashel will be attending the hearing to answer questions.

I was recently a government employee in a job where I taught blind teenagers and adults to travel safely and independently. I enjoyed this job, and I was extremely grateful that this government agency was willing to hire me as a blind person to do the job that involved teaching other blind people how to walk with a cane. Unfortunately, my experience with the Hawaii Department of Education gives me no evidence that they are willing to do the same. If the DOE argues that they have one token blind person who “teaches” orientation and mobility, I would encourage the Committees to ask how long it has been since she actually taught orientation and mobility.

Last year, with similar resolutions, I felt as if the DOE attempted to frame this resolution as saying that the NOMC would be substituted for K-12 teacher licensure. I don’t think that was ever attempted. If someone wants to be a full-time DOE teacher whose duties include teaching orientation and mobility, then such a job requires teaching licensure and a certification for orientation and mobility. Currently, the only certification approved by the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board is the Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS). Orientation and mobility services can be provided by an in-house teacher who has the right certification or an external contractor who has the right certification, just like many other disability-related interventions. Friends of mine with full teaching licensure and the NOMC have applied for jobs in the DOE and have never been interviewed.

One of the major issues here is the fact that the NOMC was created specifically because blind people were told for decades that they were not allowed to receive the COMS. First, it was an outright block against blind applicants. Once it became no longer politically viable to do that, there became a functional visual requirement, such as requiring that people could monitor what the student was doing from 400 feet away. This was a way of making the certification off-limits to blind people without technically saying that blind people were being excluded. Logically, if a sighted teacher is 400 feet away from a student and sees that they are in a situation requiring the teacher's intervention, there is almost nothing that the teacher can do besides perhaps blasting an air horn. What would the value of that be? It was purely to discriminate against blind people. To this day, there is still rampant discrimination against blind people in the process of seeking the COMS certification, which is one of the reasons why I have never attempted to earn it myself. The NOMC had to be created so that blind people could have a nondiscriminatory path to certification to provide orientation and mobility services. Since the current system in the DOE requires applicants to go through a discriminatory certification process in order to provide orientation and mobility services, the DOE is functionally discriminating against blind applicants for jobs providing orientation and mobility services.

Some of this comes from an obsolete idea that the job of the orientation and mobility specialist is to visually assess and interpret a travel environment, then tell the blind student what information they obtained visually and program the blind person to be able to navigate that specific setting. When the blind person wants to go a new setting, they can just call an orientation and mobility specialist and ask for the person to go assess and interpret that new setting and program them once again. It leads to endless job security for the instructor and a life of dependency for the blind person.

Every day, at Ho`opono and across the country, NOMC instructors are proving that obsolete idea to be false. Completely blind instructors can effectively teach blind students. Sighted instructors can do the job well, too, but only if they learn how to function nonvisually and immerse themselves in the social justice movement toward the full integration of blind people into society. The NOMC is available to both blind and sighted applicants and requires that teachers learn the common-sense techniques for teaching blind students plus develop an understanding of the real problem of blindness. The real problem of blindness is not the lack of eyesight, but the low expectations and misperceptions which exist in society. Orientation and mobility instructors must work to raise the expectations of blind people because the low expectations are the obstacles between blind students and their dreams. This is difficult to do when the process of becoming an orientation and mobility instructor is so discriminatory.

Last year, the DOE argued that they did not have any shortage of qualified teachers to provide the orientation and mobility services. I was in shock. A major goal of orientation and mobility services is teaching a student to reach a level where they can go wherever they want, whenever they want, however they want, with minimal inconvenience to themselves or others, as effectively as their sighted peers. I have never encountered any blind students in the DOE who could do that, except maybe one student who spent a lot of time with NOMC instructors outside of school. If we had NOMC teachers in the DOE and gave them the autonomy to teach the students properly, the travel skills of blind students would change fundamentally.

In 2019, at the Oahu County Convention of the Democratic Party of Hawaii, a resolution was adopted with this similar stance, and I have attached it here.

Mahalo for considering this important resolution.

Justin Mark Hideaki Salisbury, MA, NOMC, NCRTB, NCUEB

OC 2019-8. Urging the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board to Accept the National Orientation and Mobility Certification for Teachers Providing Orientation and Mobility Services

Whereas, The Department of Education (DOE) has perennially struggled to fill vacancies for teachers of blind students or teachers of the visually impaired positions, including positions providing specialized instruction in orientation and mobility; and

Whereas, Blind children in Hawai'i end up being underserved with regard to orientation and mobility within the DOE, reducing their opportunity to participate equally and meaningfully with their sighted peers and build their capacity to contribute to their communities; and

Whereas, For the teaching of orientation and mobility, the DOE currently only has instructors holding the Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist certification from the

Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals, an international certification with a long history of refusing certification to blind instructors; and

Whereas, The DOE currently has no employees who hold the National Orientation and Mobility Certification (NOMC) from the National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB), a domestic certification initially developed specifically to offer a non-discriminatory credentialing process; and

Whereas, The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board currently does not accept the NOMC offered by the NBPCB, rendering the DOE unable to provide Structured Discovery Cane Travel, a service which can only be provided by a professional certified by the NBPCB; and

Whereas, Requiring instructors to succeed in a discriminatory certification process reinforces systemic discrimination against them; and

Whereas, When parents of blind children needing Structured Discovery Cane Travel request it as a service on their Individualized Education Plans, they are consistently told that the DOE is unable to provide this service, thus leaving their blind child without sufficient services to travel safely and independently; and

Whereas, For decades, Structured Discovery Cane Travel has been empowering blind children and adults across the United States, helping them build confidence and feelings of self-respect as they navigate their world safely and without shame about their blindness; and

Whereas, the United States Department of Education recognized the validity of the National Orientation and Mobility Certification in its 2004 Institute on Rehabilitation Issues Report; and

Whereas, The NOMC from the NBPCB is already accepted by the Hawai'i Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in order to provide orientation and mobility services, where, in fact, all current providers of orientation and mobility services are blind adults certified by the NBPCB; and

Whereas, The Hawai'i State Legislature, House of Representatives, Thirtieth Legislature of the State of Hawai'i, Regular Session of 2019, Committees on Lower and Higher Education (LHE) and Labor & Public Employment (LAB) passed H.C.R. No 192, HD1, requesting the Hawai'i teacher standards board to accept the national orientation and mobility certification for teachers providing orientation and mobility services, but it did not receive a hearing by the Finance Committee; and

Whereas, The DOE, in its testimony, expressed appreciation of the intent of HCR No 192, HD1, but did not support the resolution, noting that, "Licensing and permit requirements for teachers in the state of Hawai'i are governed by the Hawai'i Teacher

Standards Board. This board is the entity that sets professional and performance standards for licensing, which includes a teaching field in Special Education Orientation and Mobility."; therefore be it

Resolved, That the O'ahu County Democrats of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i urges the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board to accept the National Orientation and Mobility Certification from the National Blindness Professional Certification Board, the same way that it accepts the Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist certification from the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals, for teachers providing orientation and mobility services within the DOE, thus expanding opportunities for qualified teachers to serve blind *keiki* and reducing discrimination against blind teachers of orientation and mobility in the Department; and be it

Ordered, That copies of this resolution shall be transmitted to the Office of the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the Chairperson of the Board of Education, the Superintendent of the Department of Education, the Chair of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board, the Administrator of the Hawai'i Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services for the Blind Branch (*Ho'opono*), the President of the National Blindness Professional Certification Board, the President of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawai'i, and the President of the Hawai'i Association of the Blind.

LATE

SCR-5

Submitted on: 3/15/2020 7:42:08 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2020 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Rachel-Star Brandt	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND OF HAWAII

Testimony Before The Senate Committee on Human Services (HMS) and the Senate Committee on Education (EDU)

State of Hawaii

Thirtieth Legislature

Regular Session of 2020

March 16, 2020, 3:00 PM hearing on SCR5 / SR4

Good afternoon committee chairs, vice chairs, and members. My name is Rachel Awa. I live in Ewa Beach, Hawaii.

I am testifying today on behalf of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) of Hawaii, asking for your affirmative vote to pass these resolutions; SCR5 / SR4. These are identical resolutions to ask the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board to accept (or recognize) the National Orientation and Mobility Certification (NOMC) as a professional qualification for teachers of the blind and visually impaired here in Hawaii.

NOMC is a credentialing process administered by the National Blindness Professional Certification Board. Aside from NOMC, the other credential available is called Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist, or COMS, administered by the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals. At present the Department of Education here in Hawaii recognizes COMS but not NOMC.

In asking you to pass SCR5 / SR4, the principle we are following here is inclusion, not exclusion. In short, we are not asking you to pick sides between NOMC and COMS. All we are asking is for the Teacher Standards Board to consider recognizing teachers and teacher candidates who possess either the NOMC or the COMS credential. At this point I should note that recognizing both NOMC and COMS is consistent with the policy of the Department of Human Services (DHS). Consequently, instructors or applicants for employment with DHS and the Services for the Blind branch called Ho'opono may hold either credential.

Others who will testify will explain the differences between NOMC and COMS, but the point is, we are not asking the state to choose; just allow both. Perhaps the best way to understand the difference would be just to look at the names of the organizations that administer the certificates.

In the case of NOMC, that certificate is awarded by the National Blindness Professional Certification Board. If you look at their website you find they don't hesitate to use the word "blind." The training methods they emphasize are referred to as "non-visual." In other words, teachers holding the NOMC credential can be expected to train their students to function effectively and efficiently without using any vision whatsoever.

On the other hand, the organization that awards the COMS credential is called Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals, carefully avoiding use of the word blind. This will be obvious if you search and compare its website. Note the use of the term "vision rehabilitation," or "vision education;" not "blindness education." The difference, emphasizing vision over blindness, is more than just a difference in terminology. Teachers who hold the COMS credential can be expected to emphasize use of a student's remaining vision in preference to teaching non-visual methods as compared to teachers who have the NOMC credential.

Aside from the difference in approach, emphasizing vision or blindness, you should note that failure by the state to recognize NOMC also tends to screen out blind people from being employed as teachers of blind or visually impaired students. In our experience this is so because most teachers who hold the COMS credential are people who can see, whereas NOMC is absolutely wide open to full acceptance of the blind. Consequently, exclusion of NOMC professionals has made it far less likely that qualified teachers who are blind will be employed in Hawaii to teach blind students.

If you pass these resolutions you don't need to take or express a position on which approach, "vision education," or "blindness education," is best. Our ask is, just don't exclude "blindness education." That is the point of these resolutions. Many states acknowledge and accept both approaches, as shown in the example from Louisiana attached.

Mahalo for bringing these resolutions to a hearing and for your kind attention to the issues they raise.

Louisiana rule

Chapter 4. Ancillary School Service Certificates

§410 Orientation and Mobility

A. Orientation and Mobility—Valid as long as holder maintains current licensure

1. Eligibility requirements:

a. Bachelor's or Master's degree with concentration in orientation and mobility earned at a regionally accredited college or university.

b. licensure issued by the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation & Educational Professionals (COMS); or

c. licensure issued by the National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NOMC).

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 17:6 (A)(10), (11), (15); R.S. 17:7(6); R.S. 17:10; R.S. 17:22(6); R.S. 17:391.1-391.10; R.S. 17:411.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Promulgated by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, LR 32:1811 (October 2006), amended LR 34:433 (March 2008).

Aloha, Rachel Awa

To: Committee on Human Services and Committee on Education

From: Deannie Nakaza, Member of the National of the Blind of Hawaii

Date: Monday, March 16, 2020

Time: 3:00 pm

Place: Conference Room 016, State Capitol

Subject: In Support of S.C.R. 5 & S. R. 4



I am a member of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii. Also, a student earning my Master's degree at the Myron B. Thompson School Social of Work.

I support S.C.R. 5 and S.R 4 because both resolutions are the same that could fill the gap of qualified teacher shortage and increase the opportunity to blind and visually impaired children's learning experience by allowing the Hawaii Teachers Standard Board to accept National Orientation and Mobility Certification.

Both, National Orientation and Mobility Certification (NOMC) and Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) places emphasis on licensing, professional competency, quality service delivery to the visually impaired and instill life learning skills.

However, NOMC unique Structured Discovery Cane Traveling is an essential part of a blind or visually impaired person's life. For the Department of Education to introduce NOMC Structured Discovery Cane Traveling to school age children, it can provide non-visual techniques, problem solving strategies, experiential learning, and confidence building skills to adulthood. History has shown that Structured Discovery Cane Traveling has empowered the blind and visually impaired to live independently. Also, that blind and visually impaired makes better teachers to the blind and visually impaired.

Ask yourself, who makes a better teacher, a blind or visually impaired certified NOMC teacher or sighted certified NOMC teacher?

Therefore, by passing S.C.R. 5 & S. R. 4, highly qualified NOMC teachers will be employed, individual educational plans will be able to provide Structured Discovery Cane Travelling service and the blind and visually impaired school age children can gain self confidence and life learning skills.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.