



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

**Date:** 03/17/2021

**Time:** 03:20 PM

**Location:** CR 229 & Videoconference

**Committee:** Senate Education

**Department:** Education

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

**Title of Resolution:** SCR 0083 URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO USE CORONAVIRUS AID, RELIEF, AND ECONOMIC SECURITY ACT AND CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE AND RELIEF SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT MONIES TO RETAIN TEACHERS AND PREVENT FURLOUGHS.

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) respectfully offers comments on SCR 83, which would urge the Department to use federal Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) relief funds appropriated by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act for the retention of teachers and to prevent furloughs.

The Department appreciates the interest and concern for school operations and student learning. While the Department agrees with the importance of recruiting and retaining a workforce of qualified, effective, and committed teachers, this resolution falls short of providing a comprehensive statement on the public school system's place in State government in terms of priority and associated level of state support. This is important to recognize as ultimately, prior to School Year 2021-22, a comprehensive assessment of all available resources and needs will be critical to ensure negative impacts to student learning due to budget cuts are mitigated to the extent possible.

The Department would also note that this resolution does not speak to the Department's top three legislative priorities for this year, which are:

1. The restoration of the \$100.2 million cut to the base budget;
2. Retaining and maximizing federal relief funds to stabilize public schools; and
3. Exploring with state leaders opportunities to secure a predictable, equitable, and stable source of K-12 funding.

<https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/DOE%20Forms/budget/HIDOELegislativePriorities2020-21.pdf>

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

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).



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## TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: SCR 83 / SR 63 – URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO USE CORONAVIRUS AID, RELIEF, AND ECONOMIC SECURITY ACT AND CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE AND RELIEF SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT MONIES TO RETAIN TEACHERS AND PREVENT FURLOUGHS.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17, 2021

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT  
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** SCR 83/ SR 63, urging the Department of Education to use Coronavirus response and relief supplemental appropriations act monies to retain teachers and prevent furloughs.

Hawai'i continues to suffer from a shortage of licensed teachers with over 1000 vacancies each year. Adding furloughs or pay cuts to their already existing low salaries when adjusted for the cost of living in Hawaii, is an insult. **The Department of Education should be prioritizing, and using, any federal funds given to them during this epidemic, as allowed, to retain our teachers along with the other support staff and personnel needed at our public schools.**

IF the Department of Education concentrates on retaining our teachers, they would not have to focus so much on the recruitment of teachers. **To recruit and retain effective educators, policymakers must find ways to lessen the financial burden of being a public school teacher, suggesting furloughs or pay cuts adds insult to injury.** We need our teachers to stay!

**The Hawaii State Teachers Association continues to not support the Department of Educations proposed use of \$63 million dollars of ESSER federal funds for private tutors and summer school, while at the same time firing teachers and other school staff. This was their plan. We do not know yet, how they will propose to spend the most recent federal funds yet.** Hiring private tutors is a luxury we cannot afford, especially as the department proposes laying off more than 700 educators. Despite the DOE saying funds have been restored to prevent layoffs, many of our teachers are still awaiting being told their positions

will not be cut. Some educators have been told their positions have been saved, but others have not. **The recent federal stimulus money that has been allocated to the Department of Education should be returned to schools via the weighted student formula and special education funding, to allow principals to retain their current qualified teachers and other support staff at their schools, or to hire additional teachers to ensure smaller class sizes. Smaller class sizes are not only safer, but it is also one of best strategies for raising student achievement as students receive more individual instruction from their teacher when the class size is small. The department should not be proposing hiring private tutors over retaining our teachers and other support personnel needed for our students.**

To make ends meet, many teachers are already forced to pick up second and third jobs, live in cramped studio apartments, and cut back on necessities like medical and dental care. They should only need to have one job so they are able to devote their full attention to their students and the preparation of lessons and grading that they usually complete after school once their students have left for the day. Instead, they are rushing off to their second or even third jobs when they would much rather concentrate on their teaching duties and their students. Many of these second and third jobs have been lost during this pandemic as well, or their spouse has lost their job, making their financial struggle harder.

**Previous HSTA surveys have found that a jarring 47 percent of teachers are spending between \$250 and \$500 per year on materials, with many spending \$1,000 or more.** That's \$250 to \$1,000 that would be spent on their own family needs, food, bills, and other personal expenses in a fully-funded school system. Notably, most teachers do not earn enough to claim the benefits of tax itemization—they cannot, for example, take mortgage deductions for homes that they cannot afford to buy either.

To take care of the needs of Hawai'i's hardworking teachers, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this resolution.