

SB 10001

Linda Lingle
Governor



Vanelle Maunalei Love
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FOR: SB1001, Relating to Education
DATE: Wednesday, February 11, 2009
TIME: 2:30 p.m.
COMMITTEE(S): Committee on Education and Housing
ROOM: Conference Room 225
FROM: Maunalei Love, Executive Director

Testimony in **SUPPORT of this Measure, with proposed Amendments.**

Chair Sakamoto, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on this measure. CSAO supports the intent of this bill to require the Department of Education to notify the charter schools of department facilities that are being considered for closure and to give due consideration to making the facilities available for use by the charter schools.

One of the major challenges of operating a charter school is finding, funding and maintaining appropriate facilities. Currently, the DOE is considering the closure of many of its school facilities that are being underutilized. In other words, insufficient students are attending some schools resulting in a very high cost per-pupil. Such facilities could be just the solution that a local charter school might be looking for. Such consideration might also benefit the DOE since it gives the students currently attending the department school the chance that they might be able to continue to attend school in their neighborhood if they wish, albeit under a new school structure.

There is also opportunity in the possibility that the DOE could potentially allow the existing department school and a charter school to share the facility in question.

As part of the application process, charter school applicants (to the panel) go through a planning stage; it would be very helpful for them to consider locating at a “closing” department school during their planning. Therefore, I respectfully ask that this bill be amended by inserting after the last paragraph of the proposed new section the following (page 2, after line 18): “As used in this section, “charter school” means any charter school already in operation and any charter school in the planning stage.”

We respectfully ask that the committee make this change and pass the bill as amended. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.



SB 1001 RELATING TO CHARTER SCHOOLS

Senate Committees on Education and Housing
Senator Norman Sakamoto, Chair
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

February 11, 2009
225

2:30p.m.

Room

Since 2005, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs has been a supporter of the charter school movement, and has collaborated in partnership with the Kamehameha Schools' Ho'olako Like program, 'Aha Pūnana Leo, Ho'okāko'o Corporation and other non-profit organizations supporting 15+ Hawaiian-focused charter schools statewide, where Native Hawaiians make up about 88% of the student population. Mahalo for this opportunity to advocate on behalf of our Native Hawaiian beneficiaries and to provide testimony on this measure, HB 1686, relating to charter schools.

Most of Hawai'i's start-up and conversion public charter schools are Hawaiian-focused charter schools and more than 3,000 Native Hawaiian children are enrolled in these schools. These schools lack sufficient funds for facility and infrastructure, capital improvements and repair and maintenance costs. Difficulties in securing adequate long-term and affordable facilities that are academically appropriate are resulting in a financial crisis for some Hawaiian-focused charters. This threatens the long-term viability of Hawai'i's public charter school system and the well-being of our Hawaiian children and families.

This measure, **SB1001**, would require the State Department of Education to consider making public school facilities available to charter schools when a public school campus is faced with closure due to declining enrollment. We believe that the facility availability as well as appropriate and equitable funding to maintain it would be feasible and supportive of the growing charter school movement.

In spite of the challenges and severe under-funding, Hawaiian-focused charter schools have demonstrated their effectiveness in serving our Hawaiian children to be more engaged and attain greater gains in the educational process as compared to their peers in conventional public schools. Our children are succeeding in the Hawaiian-focused charter schools because they are grounded in Hawaiian language, culture and values. The well-being of our Hawaiian families and communities are also enhanced by the positive gains made in our Hawaiian-focused charter schools.

The Board of Trustees, the Administration and the staff of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs is committed to fulfill its education mission to facilitate culturally sound educational opportunities for Native Hawaiians by promoting academic success and life-long learning. To this measure, the Board of Trustees has authorized and allocated 6.6 million dollars over the last three years leveraging other potential resources to fund Hawaiian-focused public

charter schools. The State is the largest stakeholder and is charged with the greatest responsibility or "*kuleana*" to make this possible.

It is not enough to make possible the opportunity for our children to attend charter schools. It is incumbent upon us to ensure that the learning environments we create for our children, and indeed for all children, must be reflective of the promising future that we envision for them and for our society.

OHA urges your **support** of this measure intended to ensure adequate adequate learning facilities and the ongoing success of Hawaiian-focused charter schools. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to present this testimony.



KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Education and Housing
Hearing Date: February 11, 2009
2:30 p.m. – Conference Room 225

***Kalei Kailihiwa, Director, Ho'olako Like
Kamehameha Schools***

Re: SB 1001 RELATING TO EDUCATION

Good afternoon Chair Sakamoto, Vice Chair Kidani and members of the Senate Committee on Education and Housing. My name is Kalei Kailihiwa, Director of Ho'olako Like of Kamehameha Schools. Thank you for this opportunity to testify **in support of SB 1001**. We believe that facilities funding is critically important for public charter schools.

Kamehameha Schools has been a collaborator in the charter school movement for more than six years now. As part of our Education Strategic plan, KS hopes to significantly impact more Hawaiian children ages 0-8 and grades 4-16+, and their families/ caregivers over the next five years, in collaboration with others whenever possible.

Currently, Kamehameha Schools works with 12 nonprofit tax-exempt organizations, including `Aha Pūnana Leo, OHA, KALO and Ho`okāko`o Corporation, to assist a total of 14 start-up and 3 conversion charters with special projects, professional development, and technical assistance. Kamehameha Schools believes that these efforts provide more positive educational choices and ultimately enhances academic achievement and greater school engagement for Hawaiian students. Through these collaborations, Kamehameha Schools currently assists more than 3,200 students in eleven communities on 4 major islands, within the public education system.

Recent research conducted over the past three years shows that Hawaiian-focused charter schools are implementing positive educational strategies and make a difference to Hawai'i's public school landscape in the following ways:

- They demonstrate success in helping "at-risk" students jump-start academic momentum using rigorous place-based and project-based strategies;
- The schools provide relevant and rigorous education in ways that engage both Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian students;
- They cultivate values of environmental stewardship and civic responsibility among future leaders;
- They build a strong sense of 'ohana through caring and supportive student/teacher relationships;
- They enhance the well-being, family involvement, and economic sustainability of communities.

In summary, supporting and replicating the successful strategies found in Hawaiian-focused charter schools is a good way to invest in education that has potential benefits for the entire public school system.



K A W A I K I N I

A New Century Public Charter School

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Education and Housing
Hearing Date: February 11, 2009
2:30 p.m. – Conference Room 225

*Mohala Aiu, Development & Community Liaison
Kawaikini New Century Charter School*

Re: SB 1001 RELATING TO EDUCATION

Ano'ai Chair Sakamoto, Vice Chair Kidani and members of the Senate Committee on Education and Housing. My name is Mohala Aiu and I am the Development & Community Liaison for Kawaikini New Century Charter School. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify **in support** of SB 1001. We know facilities funding is of vital importance for public charter schools.

Kawaikini New Century Public Charter School is a K-12 Hawaiian medium school located in Puhi, Kaua'i. We currently serve 79 students from communities of Hanalei through Kekaha. We are one of the 14 Hawaiian-focused charter schools located on Hawai'i Island, O'ahu, and Kaua'i. We are also part of the Hawai'i Charter School Network which represents all 31 schools.

Charter schools have been a part of the educational landscape since 2001. Through years of innovation and research by the Kamehameha Schools we know we are making a difference in our children, environment, and family systems. Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.