

SB689

Date: 02/11/2009

Committee: Senate Education and Housing

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Patricia Hamamoto, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB 0689 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Requires the board of education to develop a minimum staffing formula for off-ratio positions in certain schools.

Department's Position: The Department of Education **does not support S.B. 0689**. The bill would establish a minimum staffing for schools with less than 400 students but does not provide additional funding for these positions and would result in a return to the inequities experienced prior to the implementation of the Weighted Student Formula when positions were allocated to schools. Furthermore, this bill would ensure that schools with less than 400 students would have these positions when other schools would not have the same guarantee.



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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND HOUSING

RE: SB 689 – RELATING TO EDUCATION.

February 11, 2009

ROGER TAKABAYASHI, PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Sakamoto and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **strongly supports SB 689**, which requires the Board of Education to develop a minimum staffing formula for off-ratio positions in certain schools.

HSTA believes no school should have to give funding that is necessary to provide basic educational services to its students. The implementation of the weighted student formula has resulted in several staff positions being cut, such as those for librarians, counselors and teachers, who provide essential student services. Without these specialized positions, it may be difficult for students to achieve the established academic goals in their school's academic plan. For example, schools that aim to improve student body literacy will find it difficult, if not impossible, to reach its goals without a school librarian.

Relying exclusively on a weighted student formula for school funding changes the decision-making process from an academically driven process that takes into account the needs of the student body to one that is financially driven. This subverts the basic purpose of our schools. Hawaii's public schools exist to further the educational achievement of its students - not to meet financial benchmarks.

In the past we have suggested an alternative, in which all schools are funded at a level sufficient to provide basic educational services. The Basic Educational Services Today (BEST) plan calls for every school to receive the necessary funds to provide basic educational services for all students. The BEST funding formula would ensure schools

will be able to hire the librarians and counselors as well as teachers for physical education, art, music, technology, along with other personnel required to fulfill the school's identified mission.

The BEST plan proposes that every school receive enough money to provide basic educational services. The funding amount would be calculated on the currently prescribed number of educational resource providers. For example, each school would receive the funds for one vice principal for every 450 students, one counselor for every 250 students, one teacher for grades K-3 for 20 students, one librarian per school, and so forth.

SB 689 particularly addresses the smaller schools, with less than 400 students, which are not located within five miles of another school. These smaller schools have been affected greatly from the weighted student formula as they tend to receive less allocation of funds. As a result these schools often have the inability to provide basic educational services for all students – which puts its students at a great disadvantage. This bill will ensure that these schools are able to provide students with adequate services to guarantee that they can reach their highest potential.

We do not believe that providing basic educational services is asking too much for our children, their future and the future of our state educational system.

We strongly urge the committee to pass this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.