

SB798

Date of Hearing: Friday, February 13, 2009

Committee: Senate Committee on Education and Housing

Board: Education

Person Testifying: Garrett Toguchi, Chairperson, Board of Education

Title of Bill: S.B. No. 798, Relating to the Board of Education

Purpose of Bill: Strengthens the role of the Board of Education (Board) Student Member by:
(1) codifying the selection of the Student Board Member in statute; and (2)
specifying that the Board may determine any restrictions on actions taken
by the Student Board Member.

Board's Position: Chairperson Sakamoto, Vice Chairperson Kidani, and members of the
Senate Committee on Education and Housing, thank you for this
opportunity to **comment on S.B. No. 798.**

While the full Board has not taken an official position on this measure, the
Board Committee on Legislation, Public Charter Schools & Public Libraries
(Committee) voted to recommend support of S.B. No. 798 to the full Board.
The Board will be discussing/taking action on this bill at its general business
meeting next week.

As Board members, we appreciate the valuable perspective and insight of
the Student Board Member in sharing the day-to-day educational needs,
experiences, and concerns of students in our meeting discussions. We feel
that this input and perspective is critical in the development and

implementation of sound educational policies and decision making. We believe the Student Board Member enhances the Board's understanding and knowledge of current school issues. The "student voice" is an important and necessary factor in educational policymaking.

Granting the Student Board Member the authority to vote will bring Hawaii's Student Board Member in line with states such as California, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Vermont, which have granted voting rights to their student members.

At its meeting, the Board Committee also noted that this bill includes a provision that the Board may determine any restriction on actions taken by the Student Board Member. It was further noted that passage of this bill is contingent upon the ratification of a constitutional amendment that the Student Board Member be a voting member who is selected as provided by law.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on S.B. No. 798.

I Am Kelly Maeshiro, a student at Pearl City High School and the Leeward District Representative to the Hawaii State Student Council. I stand in strong support of SB No.798 for these following reasons:

1. Giving the Student Member a vote is simply democratic and represents the ideals that our nation was born of, those of a Democratic Republic, wherein self-representation and self-government are cardinal items. The students are the direct receivers of BOE Policy, so they should have influence on Board policies.
2. The student member is not liable to lawsuit while in office and is protected by the Constitution of the State of Hawaii.
3. The Board of Education Student member is the only member whose public role is in the school. He/she sees and understands the impacts of BOE policy and comprehends its implementation to the fullest extent and brings these unique concerns to the Board.
4. The Board of Education Student member is democratically elected by the students of Hawaii. Endowed within him/her is the voice of the 180,000+ students of Hawaii. He/she has proven time again his/her capacity to fully represent the students of Hawaii. He/she is at the top of the model of representation. Without his voice, the students have no voice.

Senate Bill (SB) Number 798

Title: Student BOE Member to vote on all matters

Good afternoon, Senators. My name is Alesha Gooden from the Central District, senior at Aiea High School, and I would like to speak in strong support of this bill which would allow for the student BOE member to hold partial voting rights.

The student BOE member represents a constituency of over 182,000 public and charter school students. This is a large number of the population that is being excluded from a decision making process that *directly* affects them. Hearing a student voice on the Board, the current method, is simply not enough. If each district should have their own respective members that communicate their wishes, then we firmly believe that students deserve just the same. Though voting rights may be limited, at least giving us the power to weigh in on matters that would directly affect us would

I will remind you once more that the Attorney General in 2004 stated that there is no issue of conflict when it comes to the Board member being a voting member and still a minor. As long as it is written into the constitution, it is acceptable.

The student of Hawaii can accept not voting on matter such as personnel and whatever other areas present a conflict of interest. So long as the keiki of Hawaii have their voting right. As long as the Student Board Member possesses significant weight on the Board—which can only be obtained by equal treatment—we will be content.

February 13, 2009

To: Senator Norman Sakamoto, Chair
Representative Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Education and Housing Committee

From: Matthew Howard, Hawaii State Student Council Central District Representative

Subject: Support of Senate Bill ⁷⁹⁸~~86~~, Voting Rights for the Board of Education Student Member

Aloha! My name is **Matthew Howard** and I am currently a senior at Mililani High School. I am the Hawaii State Student Council Central School District Representative. I **strongly support SB 798** and I would like to ask for your support. Currently, the student member on the Board of Education assumes all responsibilities as the adult members and takes part in all activities, except the right to vote. With the Board of Education student member representing over 182,000 students from 250 primary and secondary schools, he or she should definitely be given a vote that counts. Students are greatly affected by decisions made by the Board of Education; therefore they should have an opinion or vote in these decisions.

The Hawaii State Student Council has been actively pursuing voting rights for the Board of Education student member since 1988. It is time that the voices of the students are heard. Students are the consumers of the Hawaii public education system; we have first-hand knowledge of our education system. The BOE student member brings an insightful student perspective to discussions on educational issues. The Board of Education student member is always highly qualified and demonstrates abilities in understanding and absorbing the issues that come before the board. Being the Board of Education student member is definitely not an easy job and certainly not a job for all students, but as a member of the Hawaii State Student Council we take pride in its rigorous process of selecting a well qualified, capable, responsible student.

In numerous surveys, students have voted in favor of voting rights for the Board of Education student member. For example, 79% of voters in the Kids Vote Election voted in favor of providing the Board of Education student member with full voting rights. It is not unheard of to provide a student member on a state Board of Education with voting rights. California, Maryland, Massachusetts, Tennessee, and Iowa are states that provide voting rights to their respective Board of Education student members.

Thank you for your time and consideration, I truly hope that you will support and pass SB 798.