

Date: 01/30/2012

Committee: House Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Kathryn S. Matayoshi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB 1732 Relating to Education

Purpose of Bill: Requires the notification of a parent or guardian that a child is truant and that the student and parent or guardian may face certain penalties for the truancy. Defines "truant". Provides civil penalties for truant students and parents or guardians.

Department's Position: The Department of Education (Department) does not support HB 1732 in its present form. Although a best practice in developing truancy reduction programs includes ensuring students face firm sanctions for truancy, other elements of a comprehensive support system and effective educational strategies to combat truancy also include prevention activities and ensuring that the unique needs of each child and the underlying problems of each situation is considered.

Pre-determination of penalties based on the number of times a student is truant does not take into consideration each child's situation, their needs and the root causes of truancy. These are important factors to consider as we continue to employ strategies to reduce truancy and keep students in school and learning.

The proposed penalties also include make up classes on weekends or afternoons and truancy mediation programs. These programs do not currently exist and will require funding for personnel to staff programs, as well as program support for implementation. Concurrently, an investment must be made to support truancy prevention programs in all schools throughout the state.

The Department is committed to improving school attendance and will

continue to work with the Family Court of the Judiciary Branch, the Department of the Attorney General, the Office of Youth Services and other departments, agencies and organizations in developing procedures and practices to address truancy.

January 26, 2012

To: COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Representative Roy M. Takumi, Chair
Representative Della Au Belatti, Vice Chair

From: Christina Morimoto-Camara, MSW Student

Date: Monday, January 30, 2012; 2:00pm
Conference Room 309, State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1732: RELATING TO EDUCATION

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in **support** of HB 1732, which requires the notification of a parent or guardian that a child is truant and states that the student and parent or guardian may face certain penalties for the truancy. My name is Christina Morimoto-Camara and I am a graduate student working toward obtaining my Master of Social Work degree. I am also currently a case manager for an intensive youth monitoring program and have been working with juveniles on probation for approximately three years.

I am testifying in favor of HB 1732 because I believe truancy is a widespread issue in Hawaii's education system that needs to be addressed. In my experience working with adolescents, those who are consistently truant from school are the most likely to drop out before obtaining their high school diploma. Since these students are spending less time in the pro-social, supervised environment of a classroom, they are also more prone to participate in illegal activity and end up on juvenile probation.

In addition, the truancy penalties outlined in HB 1732 will serve as stronger motivation for students to attend school and will encourage their parents or legal guardians to take a more active role in assuring the child has transportation, supplies, and other necessary means to remain in school. Just as parents are responsible to attend court hearings and abide by court-mandated requirements for their children on probation, parents should also be held responsible for their child's education.

In closing, I am in favor of HB 1732 and its potential to decrease truancy and increase the rate of high school graduates in the State of Hawaii.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christina Morimoto, MSW Student
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