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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEES ON
EDUCATION AND LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

RE: SB 2115, SD2 – RELATING TO CHARTER SCHOOLS

March 14, 2012

WIL OKABE, PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Takumi, Chair Rhoads, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association still has some concerns about the current form of SB 2115, SD 2 and would like to offer comments. We encourage a meeting with labor representatives to address lingering doubts about charter school employment, as was suggested in task force meetings. This would give charter school teachers an opportunity to weigh in on proposed changes to the state's charter school system. Many of our teachers have been employed since Charters came to fruition, many of whom feel that ongoing discussion would provide keen insight to the challenges they have faced.

The proposed legislation repeals HRS §302B and replaces it with new, substantively different language. We remain opposed to the elimination of §302B-4, which caps the number of new and conversion charters. We understand that some of the drive to revamp the charter schools is driven by the well-publicized mistakes made in some charter schools administration, we feel that it would be ill-advised to lift the cap on the authorized number of charters without first ensuring that existing charters can comply with current law and fulfill their educational missions. Additionally, prior to authorizing a cap increase, we urge you to support new statutes with monitoring and reporting requirements to allow lawmakers an opportunity to assess the efficacy of reforms.

Funding limitations have hampered existing charter schools. Adding more charters at a time of fiscal austerity would only dilute the scarce resources available for increasing these schools' achievement levels.

We continue to oppose the establishment of a new public charter school commission that excludes teachers. To rectify this problem, we encourage you to amend the bill to include all stakeholders, including teachers, as currently provided under 302B-3. We also suggest that you reconsider the new charter law's emphasis on fiscal and organizational requirements—at the expense of professional expertise—for members of the new commission. The elimination of HRS 302B-7, which ensures equitable representation among stakeholders, could lead to schools making decisions based more on money than student needs. The same goes for eliminating teachers as required representatives on local school boards, which, if enacted, would silence the voices of those who are most experienced with managing the classroom and curriculum.

We are pleased that the measure includes “employee rights” and includes language regarding supplemental agreements. Charters must properly recognize the exclusive representative of each bargaining unit for collective bargaining purposes. We believe that the law should explicitly state that all charters shall comply with all applicable collective bargaining laws, however, and not just those related to safety and health.

HSTA supports the establishment of performance contracts for a set period of time and reforms that ensure greater accountability and transparency.

We again encourage you to allow more time for stakeholders to weigh in on areas of concern. We also ask that you solicit feedback from teachers on proposed changes before making a final decision on this measure.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on this bill.

belatti2 - Kate

From: Ingrid Tillman [moolani43@hotmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, March 14, 2012 10:24 AM
To: EDNtestimony
Subject: Charter schools, SB 2115

I would like to testify against SB.2115 because it does not address the real problems in Charter Schools which is equitable funding and facility funding.

aloha

Ingrid Tillman

teacher at the HAAS charter school in Pahoehoe, HI

LATE TESTIMONY



HAWAII TECHNOLOGY ACADEMYSM

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March 14, 2012

Honorable Roy Takumi, Chair
House Committee on Education

Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair
House Committee on Labor & Public Employment

LATE TESTIMONY

Re: SB 2115 SD2, Relating to Charter Schools – Support Intent
Conference Room 309, 2:10 PM

Aloha Chairs Takumi and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Belatti and Yamashita and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Hawaii Technology Academy (HTA), a public charter school with learning centers in Waipahu and Princeville serving students on Oahu, Kauai, Hawaii Island and parts of Maui, thank you for the opportunity to testify support the intent of these bills.

Since returning to Hawaii to take on this new role at HTA, I am committed to working alongside with many of our charter school supporters throughout the state. I am a firm believer that we need to improve the educational outcomes of Hawaii's students. As such, I look forward to assisting with the advancement of the purpose of this legislation to create a solid governance structure for Hawaii's charter school system with clear lines of authority and accountability that will foster improved student outcomes.

I do appreciate all the work that has been put into this tremendous effort to elevate and to recast a strong foundation for Hawaii's public charter schools. However, there are serious concerns regarding the chasm in funding for public charter school students which has declined significantly since Fiscal Year 2007 by 34.5% from \$9,063 to \$5,933 this Fiscal Year.

We appreciate the changes made in Section 28 of this bill to include all general fund regular education cost categories, including comprehensive school support services, adult education and the after-school plus program; provided that these services are funded by the department and exclude fringe benefit and debt service. This is a step in the right direction because children attending a public charter school should not be deprived of the same funding and resources provided for children attending a traditional public school. Under this structure, there are many other non-general fund sources from which a public charter school student would still be excluded, which we do not support.

Furthermore, we urge legislators to also consider the acknowledgement of inadequate facilities funding given for charter schools and the recommendations made by the Charter Schools Facilities Task Force in 2010.

While we agree that establishing a solid foundation for governance, improved accountability and drawing clear lines of authority are all imperative, equally imperative is the issues of **EQUITABLE FUNDING** for Hawaii's public charter schools.

As the legislature advances public charter school legislation this session, we urge legislators to work diligently to provide adequate funding to support the advancement of our public charter school students.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on this matter.

Sincerely,

Leigh Fitzgerald
Executive Director
Hawaii Technology Academy