

February 2nd, 2015

The Honorable Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair
The Honorable Senator Breene Harimoto, Vice Chair
Committee on Education
Hawaii State Senate
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chairwoman Kidani & Committee Members:

SB 126 – Relating to Education

I oppose the language of SB 126 as it stands. Although I am certainly sympathetic to the view that more could be done to build stronger connections between community members and their local public schools I believe that radically altering the governance structure of the Board of Education would not accomplish this objective.

The inclusive intent of the language in Bill 126 is no doubt admirable. It is vital that Hawaii's Board of Education reflect the full diversity of thought and experience that the Islands represent but diversity alone is insufficient. One cannot legislate an effective Board of Education. Good boards need to be constructed thoughtfully with an eye toward both the current needs and the long term objectives of the underlying institution. Surely the Governor him or herself is best placed to ensure that the composition of the BOE represents both the diversity and the broad array of skills necessary to oversee this, the most complex and largest single institution in the State.

The synchronization of members' terms, something which indisputably runs contrary to best practices for both for-profit and non-profit institutions would significantly degrade the effectiveness of the BOE and would invite the injection of a degree of short-sighted and political behavior into an institution which must above all take a long term and strategic view. The mission of the Board of Education as stated on its website is as follows:

The mission of the Hawaii State Board of Education is to promote excellence and equity in Hawaii's public schools and enable all students to meet their own unique and varied potentials.

This mission doesn't change every four years and it did not change after the recent State Constitutional referendum regarding the BOE. To be effective, the vision of both our Governor and his Board of Education must span far beyond a two or four year political cycle. We simply cannot afford a governance structure that contributes to the same "stop and go" approach to public education that is such a consistent complaint

of active teachers and administrators. No other board in the State, including the UH Board of Regents, operates in this manner and for good reason.

The Department of Education is the largest and most complex business in the State; our Governor deserves the flexibility to balance the need for experience and institutional memory with the need for fresh and representative voices.

I am naturally sympathetic to the view that given the Governor's ultimate accountability he or she should have strong input into the composition of the Board of Education. I also believe that he or she should in fact select the Board's Chairperson. As it stands, the Governor will have had the opportunity to appoint the majority of the BOE half way through his first term. Given the long term perspective needed to effectively shepherd our public school system surely this is sufficient.

It is worth bearing in mind that virtually all of the important responsibilities entrusted to our Governor have impact that extends far beyond a four or even an eight year political term. Why should the Governor's perspective on public education in Hawaii be of a shorter duration than that of our transportation, health or fiscal policy? This makes little sense given that that average public school student will spend at least 13 years in our schools – well beyond the Constitutional term limit of any administration.

Sincerely,

Bill Reeves

Oahu

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [EDU Testimony](#)
Cc: jodikunimitsu@yahoo.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB126 on Feb 2, 2015 13:15PM
Date: Monday, February 02, 2015 7:22:45 PM

SB126

Submitted on: 2/2/2015

Testimony for EDU on Feb 2, 2015 13:15PM in Conference Room 229

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Jodi Kunimitsu	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice-Chair Harimoto, and Members of the Senate Education Committee, My name is Jodi Kunimitsu, and I am a math teacher at Maui High School. I am writing in support of SB 126. I appreciate that something is being done about the current issues regarding the appointed Board of Education. I feel that it is very important for the appointed members of the BOE be closely connected to the community AND public education. The members must know what the issues are in public schools, the history behind those issues, and how best to work with those involved. In my experience with the current BOE, this is not currently happening. I also support the change in terms, which would align the terms of the BOE with that of the Governor. If the BOE is to be accountable to the Governor, the members should be appointed by the current Governor. It is not reasonable to expect people who have totally different philosophies about education to be able to work together on ways to improve the public school system. In closing, I would like to thank the maker of this bill and your committee, for taking action to address the issues raised by the public regarding the BOE. Thank you, for the opportunity to testify. Mahalo, Jodi Kunimitsu Kihei, Maui

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