



LATE

1200 Ala Kapuna Street ♦ Honolulu, Hawaii 96819
Tel: (808) 833-2711 ♦ Fax: (808) 839-7106 ♦ Web: www.hsta.org

Corey Rosenlee
President

Justin Hughey
Vice President

Amy Perruso
Secretary-Treasurer

Wilbert Holck
Executive Director

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: SB 2601 - RELATING TO ETHICS.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2016

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **strongly supports SB 2601**, relating to ethics.

If passed, this bill will allow teachers to engage in extracurricular service without having to incur extra costs to pay for their own travel expenses. Each year, educators donate their time to prepare field trips that broaden learning beyond the classroom. Educators give up their own free time to provide students with these trips, which often entail chaperone costs paid by parents. In the past, parents were willing to pay these costs because they saw the educational value of “school-sponsored trips.” These field trips were optional; parents did not *expect* teachers to sacrifice time outside of the workday or work for free.

Yet, last year, the State Ethics Commission ruled that teachers could no longer accept “free travel” to accompany students on school-sponsored trips. This ruling been devastating for teachers who coordinate extracurricular learning excursions, from band trips to visits to our nation’s capital to forays into foreign countries. The Ethics Commission’s ruling led to the cancellation of trips that had been planned for months, if not years. In the wake of this summer’s ruling, teachers immediately put planned trips on hold. For example, Kapolei High School’s band director, Daryl Agena, halted plans to take his students to the mainland to perform, as they had done at Disneyland in 2014. Additional trips may not have been officially cancelled because teachers stopped planning altogether them in the aftermath of the commission’s decision.

It has been suggested that the ethics problem raised by the commission can be solved by asking school administrators to coordinate school-sponsored trips on teachers' behalf. Unfortunately, administrators are already overtasked with managing innumerable tasks, like unnecessarily cumbersome teacher evaluations. More importantly, administrators are not intimately familiar with student needs or the nexus between school-sponsored trips and classroom curricula, and thus would not be well equipped formulate travel plans that bring classroom material to life.

Hawaii teachers, being the lowest paid in the nation, cannot afford to pay for travel expenses out of their own pockets. If we delay on exempting teachers for travel or conferences, however, thousands of students will be denied worthwhile educational experiences. Accordingly, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.



46-063 Emepela Pl. #U101 Kaneohe, HI 96744 · (808) 679-7454 · Kris Coffield · Co-founder/Executive Director

TESTIMONY FOR SENATE BILL 2601, RELATING TO ETHICS

Senate Committee on Education
Hon. Michelle N. Kidani, Chair
Hon. Breene Harimoto, Vice Chair

Friday, February 5, 2016, 1:25 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 229

Honorable Chair Kidani and committee members:

I am Kris Coffield, representing IMUAlliance, a nonpartisan political advocacy organization that currently boasts over 350 members. On behalf of our members, we offer this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 2601, relating to ethics.

According to three of the Hawaii State Department of Education's general learner outcomes, public school students are to become community contributors, complex thinkers, and effective communicators. Each of these GLOs requires and advances a cosmopolitan outlook on the world, in which curricular questions are integrated with real-life experiences that promote critical thinking and collaborative problem-solving.

Perhaps nowhere is this better advanced than in field trips involving the application of learned content and skills in extracurricular settings. From the musicianship of mainland band performances to the civic engagement of We The People competitions, group educational travel provides academic enrichment that broadens local students' learning beyond Hawai'i, increasing achievement through global knowledge formation. In some cases, this global perspective is literal, such as when teachers coordinate trips in foreign countries to forge cultural exchanges. No amount of textbook reading, internet research, or art history study can replace the experience of reliving the storming of the Bastille in the French language or gazing upon Michelangelo's *The Last Judgement* on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Teachers spend countless hours instructing students on how to appreciate different

historical, cultural, narrative, and linguistic spaces. School-sponsored trips, as the Board of Education has deemed them, deepen that appreciation into understanding.

Yet, last year, the Hawaii State Ethics Commission raised conflict-of-interest concerns regarding school-sponsored trips, prohibiting teachers from accepting free travel and accommodations from tour companies while serving as chaperones. According to the Ethics Commission, teachers who coordinate optional trips through tour companies, including their own travel costs, are functioning as agents for private travel enterprises to entice bookings from parents, while simultaneously accepting illicit individual benefits. In essence, the Ethics Commission is suggesting that our state's hardworking teachers are reviewing travel company brochures, thinking, "Oh, I've always wanted to go to Washington D.C. in March," then arranging school-sponsored trips as a cover for personal vacations.

Nothing could be further from the truth. In reality, teachers spend weeks, and sometimes months, planning each school-sponsored trip, ensuring that they are aligned with and extend classroom lessons, communicating with parents, coordinating with students, and, of course, chaperoning the trips themselves. Notably, chaperoning a trip is a 24/7 task, in which teachers are constantly preparing content, supervising conduct, purchasing supplies, and providing safety for their pupils.

Moreover, teachers perform these functions at no cost. Already the worst paid education professionals in the country (ranking fifty-first out of fifty states and the District of Columbia for starting and median teacher salary adjusted for cost of living, according to a 2015 WalletHub study), teachers who coordinate and chaperone student travel are, in effect, working for free—even working themselves into debt, given their need to subsidize a significant portion of their own travel costs, like meals. School-sponsored trips are not vacations. They're educational experiences that bring core classroom content to life, delivering what cannot be captured in a standard—the humanity, sublimity, historicity, and worldliness that turn students into lifelong learners.

We must free our teachers and students from the yoke of common corporate standards and the tyranny of toxic testing. In turn, we should offer educational opportunities that allow our educators and children to critically engage with the world around them, both within our island community and beyond our shores, fostering intellectual voyages that will chart our state's course through the 21st Century. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of this bill.

Sincerely,
Kris Coffield
Executive Director
IMUAlliance

LATE

From: [Aaron Kubo](#)
To: [EDU Testimony](#)
Subject: Testimony in support of SB2601, SB2602 and SB2425
Date: Friday, February 05, 2016 6:16:08 AM

Testimony for Committee on Education
Friday, February 5, 2016
1:25pm

Honorable Chair Kidani and committee members,

My name is Aaron Kubo. This is my eleventh year as a public school teacher; third year in Hawaii. I teach Social Studies (United States History) at Hilo Intermediate School.

I am writing testimony to urge you to support SB2601, SB2602, and SB2425.

Planning, coordinating, and implementing meaningful study tours is intensive, requires careful coordination, and 24-hour supervision of students. Teachers take this responsibility very seriously. They spend months preparing for the learning of their students while on these trips. Without the travel costs covered by the tour companies for teachers, they would not be able to afford to go, and thus, their students would also not be able to go.

The parents of our students understand the value of these trips and appreciate dedicated teachers providing these opportunities for their children. Our students and their parents are extremely disappointed and are hoping that you, our legislators, will help fight for us, the teachers, the students, and the parents to allow these valuable learning experiences to continue.

We should be thanking our teachers for providing these life experiences for our students, not treating them like they are doing something wrong. Please support SB2601, SB2602, SB2425 and let teachers continue to provide these opportunities for our students.

Thank you for your time.

I hope we can count on you for your support,

AARON KUBO
HILO INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL
TGMOE@HOTMAIL.COM

From: [Christine Omiya](#)
To: [EDU Testimony](#)
Subject: Testimony in support of SB2601, SB2602, and SB2425
Date: Friday, February 05, 2016 10:09:11 AM

LATE

Testimony for Committee on Education

Friday, February 5, 2016
1:25pm

Honorable Chair Kidani and committee members,

My name is Christine Omiya. This is my 3rd year as a public school teacher in Hawaii. I teach Japanese at Castle High School

I am writing testimony to urge you to support SB2601, SB2602, and SB2425.

Planning, coordinating, and implementing meaningful study tours is intensive, requires careful coordination, and 24-hour supervision of students. Teachers take this responsibility very seriously. They spend months preparing for the learning of their students while on these trips. Without the travel costs covered by the tour companies for teachers, they would not be able to afford to go, and thus, their students would also not be able to go.

The parents of our students understand the value of these trips and appreciate dedicated teachers providing these opportunities for their children. Our students and their parents are extremely disappointed and are hoping that you, our legislators, will help fight for us, the teachers, the students, and the parents to allow these valuable learning experiences to continue.

We should be thanking our teachers for providing these life experiences for our students, not treating them like they are doing something wrong. Please support SB2601, SB2602, SB2425 and let teachers continue to provide these opportunities for our students.

With regards to my personal experience, the trip that I had planned this year (for March 2016) had been approved in July 2015 by my Principal and Complex-Area Superintendent. So it really was a shame that the DOE/BOE/Ethics had decided to rescind that approval in November, nearly 4 months after it was given the O.K.

The trip I had planned was for my advanced class students who have been studying Japanese for 3+ years, several of whom are seniors. So the trip was supposed to have been an excellent opportunity to Japan, to further expose them to the culture and language (way more than my classroom can ever give them). Even before the 2014-2015 school year ended, my students and I were planning for the trip, deciding on which prefectures to visit or what shrines and temples to see.

I would also like to point out that for my trip in particular, I was working with JTB, a travel agency that offers NO free trips to teachers. Rather, they work out special deals with airlines and/or hotels that applied to the WHOLE group. So everyone (both my students and I) were to pay for the trip at exactly the same rate.

For the Ethics' to think that I'm (or the other teachers are) manipulating students' desire to go

on a trip for my own gain is very inaccurate. This would have been my very first student educational trip. After the July approval, my students and I worked hard to plan out an agenda that allowed them to experience Japan to the fullest. My advanced students are still extremely disappointed in the DOE/BOE/Ethics decision that forced them to miss out on such an opportunity.

Thank you for your time.
I hope we can count on you for your support,

Sincerely,
Christine Omiya
Castle High School
omiyac@knights.k12.hi.us

LATE

From:
To: [EDU Testimony](#)
Subject: Testimony in support of SB2601, SB2602, and SB2425
Date: Friday, February 05, 2016 1:51:11 PM

Honorable Chair Kidani and committee members,

My name is Jami Higashi-Lee. This is my 6th year as a public school teacher in Hawaii. I teach Spanish at Pearl City High School.

I am writing testimony to urge you to support SB2601, SB2602, and SB2425.

Planning, coordinating, and implementing meaningful study tours is intensive, requires careful coordination, and 24-hour supervision of students. Teachers take this responsibility very seriously. They spend months preparing for the learning of their students while on these trips. Without the travel costs covered by the tour companies for teachers, they would not be able to afford to go, and thus, their students would also not be able to go. In addition, we choose to give up our breaks to give our students these experiences, and therefore take time away from our own families. If we have to pay for our own travel expenses, I'd rather take my own family on a vacation. For many of our students, these are the only opportunities they will be afforded to travel away from the islands. Taking that away from them would be a detriment to learning experiences outside their reality. It was so awesome to be able to teach about Velazquez's famous painting of *Las Meninas*, and then to see it up close and personal in the Prado Museum in Madrid--you surely can't put a price on an experience like that.

The parents of our students understand the value of these trips and appreciate dedicated teachers providing these opportunities for their children. Our students and their parents are extremely disappointed and are hoping that you, our legislators, will help fight for us, the teachers, the students, and the parents to allow these valuable learning experiences to continue.

We should be thanking our teachers for providing these life experiences for our students, not treating them like they are doing something wrong. Please support SB2601, SB2602, SB2425 and let teachers continue to provide these opportunities for our students.

Thank you for your time.

I hope we can count on you for your support,

NAME Jami Higashi-Lee
SCHOOL Pearl City High School
EMAIL jami_higashi_lee@notes.k12.hi.us

LATE

Honorable Chair Kidani and committee members,

My name is Jennifer Hanna. This is my second year as a public school teacher in Hawaii. I teach Spanish at Radford High School.

I am writing testimony to urge you to support SB2601, SB2602, and SB2425.

Planning, coordinating, and implementing meaningful study tours is intensive, requires careful coordination, and 24-hour supervision of students. Teachers take this responsibility very seriously. They spend months preparing for the learning of their students while on these trips. Without the travel costs covered by the tour companies for teachers, they would not be able to afford to go, and thus, their students would also not be able to go.

The parents of our students understand the value of these trips and appreciate dedicated teachers providing these opportunities for their children. Our students and their parents are extremely disappointed and are hoping that you, our legislators, will help fight for us, the teachers, the students, and the parents to allow these valuable learning experiences to continue.

We should be thanking our teachers for providing these life experiences for our students, not treating them like they are doing something wrong. Please support SB2601, SB2602, SB2425 and let teachers continue to provide these opportunities for our students.

As a Spanish teacher on the island of Oahu, I am incredibly limited in terms of including realia in the classroom. Hawaii's geographic location in the middle of the Pacific Ocean has made "relevance" a difficult concept for many students to grasp. Often, students will ask, "Why should I study Spanish if I am never going to use it [in Hawaii]?" If the state and schools cannot provide or offer a legitimate resource, such as a study abroad program, then how can World Language teaching professionals realistically answer this question. These trips provide a myriad of first-hand teaching opportunities, as well as real life experiences that simply cannot be taught in a classroom. Imagine students utilizing their studied world language(s) with native speakers in the actual native setting. The confidence students acquire through these real-life experiences is phenomenal, and thus creates perseverance to continue trying to speak the language. Not only are students gaining more confidence in themselves, but they are also experiencing the beauty of diversity abroad. They are tasting new foods; touching ancient ruins; viewing historical cathedrals, palaces, courtyards; and learning cultural facts in such a manner that simply out-rivals classroom instruction. Hawaii's DOE already carries a negative connotation for not offering a cut-rate education model for its students (when compared to mainland schools). By eliminating these trips, the state will only continue to encourage the circulation of such negative propaganda. Elimination of these trips will limit student opportunities for enlightenment.

Thank you for your time.

I hope we can count on you for your support,

Jennifer Hanna

Radford High School

Jennifer_hanna@notes.k12.hi.us

LATE

From:
To: [EDU Testimony](#)
Cc:
Subject: Testimony in support of SB2601, SB2602, and SB2425
Date: Friday, February 05, 2016 11:56:23 AM

EDUtestimony@capitol.hawaii.gov

Testimony in support of SB2601, SB2602, and SB2425

Testimony for Committee on Education
Friday, February 5, 2016
1:25pm

Honorable Chair Kidani and committee members,

My name is Karen Matsunaga. This is my 35th year as a public school teacher in Hawaii. I have taught French at Campbell High School, French and Spanish at Washington Middle School, and French and Spanish at Roosevelt High School. (I also taught French for 9 years at Juanita High School in Kirkland, WA and took students to Europe for 6 weeks in 1976 and 7 weeks in 1978.)

I urge you to support SB2601, SB2602, and SB2425.

Our 2016 trip to Greece and Italy will be our 13th Roosevelt trip. We started in 2004 when my daughter was a senior and we wanted to give her and her classmates and friends a most memorable experience travelling to Paris, Barcelona and Madrid. The Roosevelt co-chaperones were the Computer Art/Photography teacher, the Spanish teacher, and me, the French teacher. Subsequent co-chaperones were the Art History/Humanities teacher, Ceramics teacher, General Art/Sculpture/AP Art teacher, Photography teacher, English teacher and Librarian. My husband has travelled as an adult participant on most of the trips. He is an architect, so the adult support on all the trips has been varied and supportive of the cultural, art, history and language learning objectives of each trip.

The impact on students and adult participants is immeasurable. Participants met tour directors from England, Germany, Italy, Spain, and France. They travelled with other student groups from Texas, Florida, California, Missouri, and Ohio. Some have gone on to major in theater, film, art history, graphic design, architecture, languages, elementary and secondary education, business, international law, photography, engineering, construction management, physical therapy, hotel restaurant management and culinary arts. We have an EMT in the National Guard in Honolulu and two English teachers in Japan. Seven travelers this year are our former students who are now working and are so excited to be travelling with us, their former teachers! A younger sister and a mom are tag-alongs.

Planning, coordinating, and implementing meaningful study tours is intensive, requires careful coordination, and 24-hour supervision of students. We take this responsibility very seriously. We spend months preparing for the learning of our students while on these trips. It takes us 24 hours to get to our destination and by the time we get used to the 11 hour time difference, we are on our way back to Honolulu. Without the travel costs covered by the tour companies for us teachers, we would not be able to afford to travel on a yearly basis, and thus, would not be able to share these opportunities with our students. **We have also, on several occasions, paid to chaperone the students** when the student/teacher ratio has not entitled all the chaperones to a cost-free trip.

The trips to France also enhanced my ability to teach the rest of my students and strengthen my personal education. I am positive that the other co-chaperones also feel that their travels have also affected their teaching abilities.

The parents of our students understand the value of these trips and appreciate dedicated teachers providing these opportunities for their children. Our students and their parents are extremely

disappointed in the Ethics Commission's recent decision and are hoping that you, our legislators, will help fight for us, the teachers, the students, and the parents to allow these valuable learning experiences to continue.

One should be thanking teachers for providing these life experiences for our students, not treating them like they are doing something wrong. We teachers were shocked to hear that some in the public perceive our intentions as unethical when our entire sentiment was to offer our trip participants an educational and cultural adventure of a lifetime.

Please support SB2601, SB2602, SB2425 and let us continue to provide these opportunities for our students. Thank you for your time. I hope we can count on you for your support,

NAME: Karen Matsunaga

SCHOOL: Roosevelt High School

EMAIL: karen_matsunaga/rsvlt/hidoe@notes.k12.hi.us

LATE

From: Scott_Clarke/BALDWIN/HIDOE@notes.k12.hi.us
To: [EDU Testimony](#)
Subject: Testimony in support of SB2601, SB2602, and SB2425
Date: Friday, February 05, 2016 6:24:31 AM

Honorable Chair Kidani and committee members,

My name is Scott Clarke. This is my 23rd year as a public school teacher in Hawaii. I teach AP European History at H.P. Baldwin High school.

I am writing testimony to urge you to support SB2601, SB2602, and SB2425.

Planning, coordinating, and implementing meaningful study tours is intensive, requires careful coordination, and 24-hour supervision of students. Teachers take this responsibility very seriously. They spend months preparing for the learning of their students while on these trips. Without the travel costs covered by the tour companies for teachers, they would not be able to afford to go, and thus, their students would also not be able to go.

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We should be thanking our teachers for providing these life experiences for our students, not treating them like they are doing something wrong. Please support SB2601, SB2602, SB2425 and let teachers continue to provide these opportunities for our students.

Thank you for your time.
I hope we can count on you for your support,

NAME: Scott Clarke
SCHOOL: H.P. Baldwin High School
EMAIL: Scott_Clarke@notes.k12.hi.us

Scott Clarke
Social Studies Department Chair
H.P. Baldwin High School
1650 Kaahumanu Ave.
Wailuku, HI 96793
(808)-984-5656 x 7273174