

HB-2421

Submitted on: 1/28/2020 7:50:28 PM

Testimony for HSH on 1/31/2020 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Carmie Spellman	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

47-345 D Hui Iwa Street
Kaneohe, HI 96744

January 31, 2020

The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura
Chair
House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street, Room 442
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Re: House Bill 2421 Relating to Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind

Dear Chair San Buenaventura and members of the House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness,

House Bill 2421 Relating to the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind (HSDB) establishes an independent and expertise-driven Board of Trustees at HSDB to ensure the educational needs of students who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind are met.

I am a member of the Deaf and Blind Task Force, and I strongly support this bill. Establishing an independent governing structure of people with expertise delineated in the bill will ensure that students who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind will have teachers and staff working with them who are fluent in American Sign Language, as well as being knowledgeable about appropriate and current educational methods and techniques in deaf education. At the core of this is the acquisition of a language that is understandable and culturally appropriate for children who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. As hearing people, we take language for granted because we learned language from our parents, family, and community on a daily basis. Language provides us with a cultural base and links people with a common language to each other. Imagine how your experience and development would have been different if you did not have the opportunity to learn language the way you did as a hearing person.

My first professional job was as a vocational evaluator with the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation on the mainland. I worked with deaf students who graduated or received a certificate from a school for the deaf and blind, but they did not have adequate communication or educational skills to compete competitively for jobs in the local community. If HSDB had a governing board consisting of members as recommended in this bill, language acquisition and education will be available for students who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind and this inclusive environment will allow them to obtain jobs or attend college similar to hearing students who graduate from their community high schools.

This bill provides an excellent opportunity for HSDB to develop, educate, and maintain a learning environment that is one in which students who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind can learn and thrive. Please help us develop a learning environment that provides an optimal starting point by establishing an independent governing board that will allow HSDB to be a school that empowers and encourages this student population to reach their full potential.

Please pass this bill out of committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,



Debra L. Jackson, M.S.
Member
Deaf and Blind Task Force

HB-2421

Submitted on: 1/29/2020 2:02:17 PM

Testimony for HSH on 1/31/2020 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Stephen Laracuenta	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing this testimony as a concerned Deaf citizen who is familiar with the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind (HSDB) as an employee. I am currently the Vice Principal at HSDB, but currently looking forward to retirement on July 1, 2020. This is my 25th year at HSDB. I have 10 years in the Deaf Education field from New York City and a total of 31 years of Deaf Education experience with the State of Hawaii DOE, for a grand total of 41 years in the Deaf Education field.

I am in support of [HB2421](#), RELATING TO THE HAWAII SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND BLIND. Creates a Board of Trustees for the Hawai'i School for the Deaf and Blind to establish an independent governance structure for the school.

Currently HSDB is governed by the Honolulu District Office under the direction of the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) for Farrington, Kalani, Kaiser Complex. This has not historically been a good working relationship nor an efficient one for that matter, for improving Deaf Education at HSDB or for Deaf Education in general. Outside of HSDB, there are very few, if any, experts in Deaf Education at the Honolulu District level who understand the needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing students. This makes it difficult to explain the needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing students and get the resources needed to meet those needs.

HSDB is often consulted to advise the State of Hawaii DOE personnel from all over the state regarding the needs of their Deaf/Hard of Hearing students. Currently, we are a School and are focused primarily on the students we have on campus. However, ALL HSDB students are transfers from other "home" schools around the State of Hawaii. Many times when we are consulted, it is because the "home" school wants to make sure they are doing everything possible to ensure the Deaf/Hard of Hearing student's success.

Neighbor Island students board in our Dormitories (we have separate Boys' and Girls' Dormitories that are currently operating close to capacity). There are many UNIQUE challenges HSDB must deal with everyday that require us to be creative and look elsewhere, even on the State level for advice and resources. It makes sense to me and HSDB staff that HSDB should be under some kind of governing board at the State

level, composed of people who are knowledgeable about Deaf Education and/or knowledgeable about finding resources that will benefit Deaf and Hard of Hearing students STATEWIDE. The Honolulu District Office is limited with its resources. Access to statewide resources would make HSDB a more effective center or hub for improving education for Deaf/Hard of Hearing at the State level.

Muchos mahalos for allowing me to testify this way since I can't leave my current job during the day to testify in person.

Steve Laracuenta

SLaracuenta@msn.com

Tetimony of Roderick J. Macdonald
Submitted to the House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

Friday, January 31, 2020
8:30 am - Conference Room 329
Hawaii State Capitol

The Honorable Joy San Buenaventra, Chair

Madam Chair, Members:

My name is Rod Macdonald. I am both deaf and blind, and I am submitting this testimony to strongly urge you to pass HB2421 to establish an independent, expertise-driven Board of Trustees to oversee and manage the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind (HSDB).

Here in Hawaii we look at the State Capitol as the focal point of our community. It is where programs and services for our community originate. It is where we look for solutions to our problems. It is the symbol of our community.

In a very similar and much more personal way, the HSDB is the symbol of the community within Hawaii of individuals with less-than-optimum hearing - Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind people. Our children were educated at this school; our community looks to this school for guidance, strength and continuing education. This school is not your usual Public School Number 123 - it is OUR SCHOOL, the one-and-only.

It is, therefore, immensely important to us that "OUR" school is managed, evaluated and overseen by educators who understand the bi-lingual, bi-cultural philosophy applicable to Deaf education in place at 3440 Leahi Avenue. It is emotionally important to us that this school be guided, overseen, directed and administered by individuals with expertise specific to the school's mission, rather than generic special education.

This is the purpose of HB2421 - to establish an independent Board of Trustees with expertise in the specialized subject matter that is HSDB. We look to have community representation, especially from parents with students at HSDB and graduates who have been educated there. We look to have a meaningful voice in the symbol of our community.

This approach has been tested successfully in other states. The Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind is administered in this manner, and is among the highest-achieving such schools in the country.

Please support SB2421, OUR COMMUNITY SCHOOL.

Thank you.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 01/31/2020

Time: 08:30 AM

Location: 329

Committee: House Human Services &
Homelessness

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB 2421 RELATING TO THE HAWAII SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF
AND BLIND.

Purpose of Bill: Creates a Board of Trustees for the Hawai'i School for the Deaf and
Blind to establish an independent governance structure for the school.

Department's Position:

The Department of Education (Department) respectfully offers the following comments regarding SB 2246 requesting the Department to create a Board of Trustees for the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind (HSDB) in order to establish an independent governance structure for the school.

The Department has already taken steps to improve and expand services to students who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind through the efforts of a designated workgroup. The workgroup was formed to develop an actionable plan that builds a statewide system of supports and services to meet the needs of all the Department's Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind students (which includes students who use American Sign Language [ASL], hearing aids, or cochlear implants). This workgroup includes representatives from various stakeholder groups, including representatives who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The Department applies the National Association of State Directors of Special Education's (NASDSE) *Optimizing Outcomes for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing: Educational Service Guidelines* (2018) in their development work. The workgroup is also looking at other state Deaf Education schools and systems as possible models. With the workgroup, the Department has formed collaborative partnerships with people who are knowledgeable in deaf education and fluent in ASL to help with decision-making. The workgroup is aimed at improving programs and services statewide where established, including at HSDB. In addition, HSDB will be going through a review process using the NASDSE criteria to examine current practices and receive recommendations from national experts for their academic and financial plan.

Consistent with language from SB 2486, it is important to note that this bill does not address accountability and responsibility for laws and Board of Education policies regarding civil rights, fiscal responsibilities, student safety, facilities management, and student achievement.

Finally, the Department has initiated a workplan to mitigate and repair the school facilities, in particular, the dorms and library, based on recent request by its principal.

The Department continues to put the needs of our students first and is committed to ensuring the academic achievement, safety and well-being of each and every student at HSDB.

The Hawai'i State Department of Education is committed to delivering on our promises to students, providing an equitable, excellent, and innovative learning environment in every school to engage and elevate our communities. This is achieved through targeted work around three impact strategies: school design, student voice, and teacher collaboration. Detailed information is available at www.hawaiipublicschools.org.

HB-2421

Submitted on: 1/29/2020 11:37:33 PM

Testimony for HSH on 1/31/2020 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Brian Nakamoto	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Representative Joy A. San Buenaventura,

My name is Brian Nakamoto and I reside in Pearl City. I am also working as one of the teachers at Hawai'i School for the Deaf and the Blind. I also am an alumnus of that deaf school, as I have been a student from 1990 to 1999. Now, as a teacher at the school since the dawn of fall semester in 2011, I have seen the ups and downs at the deaf school, as well as I've seen when I was a student in years ago.

I am in support of having the board of trustees to be established for Hawai'i School for the Deaf and the Blind because it is a unique school, unlike other public schools in our state such as Lahainaluna High School, Pearl City High School, or Waimalu Elementary School. It is composed of all grades from preschool to high school where Deaf students can thrive through their first language, American Sign Language.

Based on what I have learned during my progress of obtaining a teaching licensure and be able to work at the deaf school, I have learned that American Sign Language is very essential to master in our students before they can acquire English as second language. English is usually the first language for most of our hearing counterparts, but not for me and not for my students, as we all acquire American Sign Language as our first language. We need to master in that language in order to be able to excel in English language as our second language.

The problem here is, our current Department of Education, does not have a clear understanding of how bilingual-bicultural curriculum of American Sign Language and English work in our deaf school. They currently do not have a person with extensive expertise in bilingual-bicultural approach with strong background of Deaf education that can steer our school in its right path.

By mentioning the ups and downs at our deaf school that I have witnessed over years, those ups were the years when we had administrators or principals who had expertise in Deaf education and is able to converse in American Sign Language. Those downs were the years where we see our administrators with severe lack of expertise in understanding how Deaf education works. Our school is similar as of that Kula Kalapuni 'O Ānuenue (Anuenue School), as we have our immersion in American Sign Language, where all of our instruction is facilitated through American Sign Language,

yet our school is different from Anuenue School in term of education, because Anuenue School has hearing students while our school have Deaf students. We cannot teach both with same pedagogical approaches; that is where Deaf education comes in and it is completely distinguished from the norm of instructional approaches in regular public school.

It is frustrating that we have to deal with Department of Education's poor decisions for our deaf school, as it grapples through different principals for the past decade, especially when we had a hearing principal who was evidently uncertain of what to do with our deaf students. We did have a deaf principal that worked with us from 2016 to 2019, we saw a golden age at HSDB. During that golden age, we assembled our Robotics team, secured the spot as the co-host for West Regionals Academic Bowl competition to be hosted here in Honolulu for the first time, saw growth in our students' Lexile and MAP (measurement of academic performance) levels, improved the morale among students and staff at HSDB, and many more. Up until August 2019, when we received a tragic news that the deaf principal was temporarily reassigned, we got a temporary assigned principal on the loan from Kāhala Elementary School. Again, a principal with lack of Deaf education. That has been going on in an evident cycle over the years, especially when we had Dr. Jane K. Fernandes, then Dr. Jeanne G. Prickett, then Mrs. Sydney Dickerson.

This cycle has to stop now. I urge you to consider this, especially for our deaf children's future. They deserve the best quality of education and in order to give them that, we need a board of trustees to oversee our deaf school. That way, the board can select a potential principal with extensive background of Deaf education, which can ensure that our deaf students get the education they deserve in our State of Hawai'i.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Aloha.

Brian Nakamoto
Pearl City, Hawai'i

LATE

Aloha,

This letter is to provide comments on HB2421 – Relating to the Hawai'i School for the Deaf and Blind. I am a hearing mother of a deaf son (7 years old) who attends HSDB. We have had our share of qualified, but many unqualified providers. I'm not sure all were discriminatory as much as they were uneducated. Many unqualified individuals wanted what was best for my son, but just didn't know how or what that was. It was not their fault, it was the system's fault for not providing means to be properly trained, certified, and or for leadership to place qualified individuals into those roles.

This bill speaks to a lot of the challenges we faced early on with his education. I'm not completely in agreement that those challenges still exist today, but know that recent events have shaped the communities views and altered their trust on the hearing community. Hawaii is not foreign to this concept as we have been faced with discrimination to our native rights.

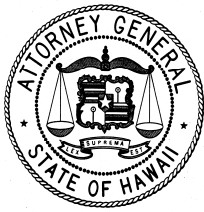
However, although this addresses my equal concern for effectively providing quality education to our state's deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children, I am apprehensive to have a stance in support or opposition. The outline is very pleasing to a mother like me who advocates for the rights of my deaf son. There is evident lack of appropriate and qualified staff on many levels in many of the state's educational channels. In the last 7 years of advocacy, we face challenges as parents to access of adequate and quality information to support our decisions on the paths of our child's education.

With that being said, many families whose children attend HSDB or any other deaf program in the State of Hawaii cannot afford private schooling. So although another state has their DOE overarching the administration of their school, are these the same option for the State of Hawaii when you have it appointed by a government official? How will the overall process operate, who will be responsible, who will be authorized to approve, and what are the contingency plans to ensure the school doesn't lose funding in order to provide services for our children. Many families are already swayed to attend their home district school based on their home school staff. Some families, especially hard of hearing children, specifically those with unilateral hearing loss are pushed into their home school. These districts claim they provide "total communication" or that their child doesn't display delay and if/when the child does, then a discussion of school placement can be viewed again.

This causes the continued gap in providing adequate resources to families and specifically our children. I am unsure if this is the road to bridge the gap and provide what our kids need...adequate, appropriate, qualified education is resolved in this bill by creating a board and eliminating enrollment requirements. I'd like to first see what part DOE will be involved with and how can we ensure that ALL Hawaii children and their families are given the RIGHT resources to attend a school at the beginning of their transition meetings.

Mahalo,

Nīkī Kēpo`o



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE, 2020**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. NO. 2421, RELATING TO THE HAWAI'I SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND BLIND.

BEFORE THE:

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES AND HOMELESSNESS

LATE

DATE: Friday, January 31, 2020

TIME: 8:30 a.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 329

TESTIFIER(S): Clare E. Connors, Attorney General, or
Melissa J. Kolonie, Deputy Attorney General

Chair San Buenaventura and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments.

The purpose of this bill is to establish an independent governance structure for the Hawai'i School for the Deaf and Blind.

The bill creates a Board of Trustees for the Hawai'i School for the Deaf and Blind. On page 6, lines 18 – 20, the bill states, "[t]he board of trustees shall be responsible for the management and policy decisions for the Hawai'i School for the Deaf and Blind." The Hawai'i School for the Deaf and Blind is a public school. Under article X, section 3, of the Hawaii Constitution, the Board of Education is empowered to formulate statewide educational policy. This bill does not address how the policies of the Board of Trustees will be consistent with the statewide policies of the Board of Education. As such, we recommend adding the following provision at the end of the first sentence on page 6, lines 18-20, of the bill:

provided that the policy decisions of the board of trustees shall be
consistent with the policies of the Board of Education.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

Aloha, Members of the Committee on Human Services and Homelessness.

Please support HB 2421 which would provide for the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind (HSDB) to have its own Board of Directors. I have three sisters and a nephew who are deaf. I feel that it would be beneficial to the students at HSDB to have its own Board of Directors who should have experience with, and/or knowledge of, deaf and blind people and who would understand their specific needs to thrive.

Mahalo.

Jennifer Chiwa

LATE

LATE

HB-2421

Submitted on: 1/31/2020 8:05:24 AM

Testimony for HSH on 1/31/2020 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Darlene Ewan	Aloha State Association of the Deaf	Support	No

Comments: