



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

**Senate Committee on Education**

Monday, March 16, 2020  
3:15 p.m.  
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 229

**House Bill 2511, House Draft 1, Relating to Charter Schools**

Dear Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and Members of the Committee:

The Board of Education ("Board") supports HB 2511 HD1, which would appropriate general funds for infrastructure costs, lease or rent assistance, and repair and maintenance of network infrastructure for charter schools.

The Board supports proposed legislation that addresses charter school facilities needs as a longstanding and unresolved issue that the Board cites in its annual charter school report to the Legislature every year.

The Board's position on this measure is only in regards to the general public policy matter of providing resources to offset charter school facilities costs, and the Board defers to the State Public Charter School Commission and each affected charter school on operational and implementation matters that this measure might affect.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on behalf of the Board.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catherine Payne". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Catherine" and last name "Payne" clearly distinguishable.

Very truly yours,

Catherine Payne  
Chairperson, Board of Education  
Chairperson, 2020 Legislative Ad Hoc Committee

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR



JOHN S.S. KIM  
CHAIRPERSON

STATE OF HAWAII  
**STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION**  
**(‘AHA KULA HO‘ĀMANA)**

<http://CharterCommission.Hawaii.Gov>  
1111 Bishop Street, Suite 516, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813  
Tel: (808) 586-3775 Fax: (808) 586-3776

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FOR:	HB 2511 HD1 Relating to Charter Schools
DATE:	March 16, 2020
TIME:	3:15 P.M.
COMMITTEE:	Committee on Education
ROOM:	Conference Room 229
FROM:	Yvonne Lau, Interim Executive Director State Public Charter School Commission

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Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and members of the Committee:

The State Public Charter School Commission (“Commission”) appreciates the opportunity to submit this testimony in **SUPPORT of HB 2511 HD1** which provides funding for the rental or lease of facilities, infrastructure costs, and the repair and maintenance of network infrastructure for public charter schools.

Facilities costs for charter schools continues to be one of the greatest unaddressed challenges for Hawaii’s chartering system. In school year 2018-2019, charter schools expended more than \$11.1 million for rent/lease payments, repair and maintenance, and utilities payments. The Commission determined this figure based on information provided from the annual audits that all charter schools are required to complete, pursuant to Section 302D-32, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

The needs of each individual charter school vary greatly as shown by a range of facility-related expenses, which start at about \$33,400 to a high of \$1.4 million. The reasons for this wide disparity can be attributed to the wide range of facilities that charter schools operate in, which include former Department of Education schools, unused state facilities, private buildings, and new campuses built from scratch. Any support provided by this committee and the Legislature would go far in addressing the challenge that charter schools have faced in regards to facilities funding.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

**HB2511 HD1**  
**RELATING TO CHARTER SCHOOLS**  
Senate Committee on Education

March 16, 2020

3:15 p.m.

Room 229

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** HB2511 HD1, which would provide funding to the State Public Charter School Commission to allocate to state public charter schools for infrastructure costs, rental or lease of facilities, and repair and maintenance of network infrastructure, as determined by the Commission. **This bill would help alleviate the unique financial burdens borne by start-up public charter schools in meeting their basic facilities needs.**

Hawai‘i’s public charter schools are indeed deserving of equity, and have already demonstrated their potential for innovation and excellence notwithstanding their unique financial challenges. Most recently, some public charter schools have outperformed the state average in areas such as on-time graduation rates, college matriculation rates, and reduced chronic absenteeism, as reflected in the latest Strive HI SY 2017-2018 performance scores; lessons learned in such charter schools can benefit students and schools throughout our public education system. As a testament to Hawai‘i’s charter schools’ success, on December 6, 2016, the BOE-approved updated State Education Strategic Plan for 2017-2020 describes “the shared objectives for equity and excellence for every child across Hawai‘i’s nearly 300 public schools, including our public charter schools and Hawaiian language medium schools”; the Plan also includes the objective that “Hawai‘i public schools will foster innovation and the expansion of existing public school ‘Bright Spots,’ which includes learning from charter schools that were established as innovation labs” (emphasis added).

Unfortunately, although Hawai‘i’s public charter schools continue to demonstrate their distinct value to Hawai‘i’s students, addressing public charter schools’ facilities needs continues to be a critical and longstanding issue in the charter school community. Start-up charter schools in particular must pay for substantial facilities costs using their already-stretched operational funds. This is a cost that is not borne by conversion charter schools, or schools under the Hawai‘i Department of Education, and that may unfairly impede start-up schools from realizing their full potential for their students and as “innovation labs” for public education as a whole.

Notably, the State Board of Education (BOE) itself has acknowledged the longstanding need to address this funding disparity, and its most recent report to the 2019 Legislature “recommends that the Legislature provide some form of facilities funding to

charter schools to address this unmet [facilities funding] need.” The BOE’s report also recognized the importance of our public charter schools as an integral component of our public education strategy.

**To fully realize the potential for innovation in charter schools that may in turn foster greater student success in our public school system as a whole, it is critical that public charter schools receive adequate appropriations for facilities funding.** HB2511 HD1 will help bring equity to our public charter schools, and address the longstanding problem of funding for charter schools’ facilities.

Therefore, OHA urges the Committee to **PASS** HB2511 HD1. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.



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Logan Okita  
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Wilbert Holck  
Executive Director

## TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATECOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB 2511, HD1 - RELATING TO CHARTER SCHOOLS

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2020

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT  
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **strongly supports HB 2511, HD1** relating to charter schools.

Facilities funding is a long-standing issue for charter schools. In Hawai'i, start-up charter schools have paid the costs of their facilities from operational funds. In 2013; however, lawmakers authorized the Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission to request facilities funding as part of its annual budget request. Later, in 2015, legislators called for a working group to establish a framework for providing facilities funding and support for public charter school facilities with adequate prioritization, oversight, and accountability.

Today, amounts received by charter schools fail to keep pace with the cost of providing and quality instruction and maintaining adequate facilities. Charter schools receive \$7,359 per-pupil, most of which is disbursed toward operational expenses, often leaving charters to rely on private donations to fund facilities and rent. Charter schools' per-pupil operating funds cover items like salaries, collective bargaining costs, curricula, school supplies, equipment, and utilities, but do not encompass the facilities and maintenance costs that comprise approximately 10 percent of charter school budgets, according to the Hawai'i Public Charter Schools Network.

Poorly funded charter schools are sometimes forced to hold classes in unstable temporary structures to the detriment of their students' learning and safety. **Accordingly, we urge the committee to approve additional state funds for the repair, maintenance, acquisition, and rental of charter school facilities.**

To provide charter schools with the funds they need for their students to succeed, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.

**HB-2511-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2020 3:05:06 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2020 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Dabney Gough	Testifying for SEEQS: the School for Examining Essential Questions of Sustainability	Support	No

## Comments:

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and members of the Committee:

I am writing to **STRONGLY SUPPORT** HB 2511, which provides necessary assistance to charter schools and the many Hawai'i families that depend on them.

As a Governing Board member of SEEQS, I have seen firsthand both the challenges and opportunities presented to public charter schools in Hawaii, and the lack of funding for facilities is one of the most significant.

SEEQS has operated as a successful public charter middle school since 2013. SEEQS students perform well on Hawai'i State Assessments while also contributing to their community through student-led projects completed in the interdisciplinary, project-based, sustainability-focused course at the heart of our unique school model.

Enrollment applications regularly exceed the number of spots available and families often tell us how grateful they are to have access to a school with a philosophy that aligns with their own.

HB 2511 will ease the facilities burden, enabling SEEQS and its charter school peers to continue as important contributors to our statewide educational ecosystem.

- Charter schools are public schools and serve over 11,500 students in 37 schools statewide.
- Charter schools are a valuable and necessary part of the public school system.
- Charter schools increase access to diverse educational options for all Hawai'i families. This includes curricula grounded in innovative, forward-looking practices or closely-held values.

Mahalo,

Dabney Gough

SEEQS Governing Board



TO: Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair  
 Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair  
 Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Brad Punu, Individual

RE: HB2511, RELATING TO CHARTER SCHOOLS  
 Monday, March 16, 2020, 3:15 pm

### TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2511, RELATING TO CHARTER SCHOOLS

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and members of the Committee:

As an individual who also serves on the SEEQS Foundation Board I **STRONGLY SUPPORT** HB 2511, which provides necessary assistance to charter schools and the many Hawai'i families that depend on them. For 7 years I have watched the school evolve into the wonderful institution it is today and seen hundreds of students thrive in its unique system. And while SEEQS has done a wonderful job with its spaces the students deserve more than class in a tent and tenuous campus arrangements. ***They deserve a learning environment they can call their own.***

While SEEQS has operated as a successful public charter middle school since 2013, securing a long-term, stable facility is the single biggest threat to SEEQS's ability to continue meeting the needs of our students and exceeding the expectations of our families.

SEEQS students perform well on Hawai'i State Assessments while also contributing to their community through student-led projects completed in the interdisciplinary, project-based, sustainability-focused course at the heart of our unique school model.

Enrollment applications regularly exceed the number of spots available and families often tell us how grateful they are to have access to a school with a philosophy that aligns with their own.

HB 2511 will ease the facilities burden, enabling SEEQS and its charter school peers to continue as important contributors to our statewide educational ecosystem.

- Charter schools are public schools and serve over 11,500 students in 37 schools statewide.
- Charter schools are a valuable and necessary complement to schools operated by the Hawai'i State Department of Education.
- Charter schools increase access to diverse educational options for all Hawai'i families. This includes curricula grounded in innovative, forward-looking practices or closely-held values.

Mahalo,

*Brad Punu*

Brad Punu





## **HOUSE BILL 2511, HD1, RELATING TO CHARTER SCHOOLS**

MARCH 16, 2020 · SENATE EDUCATION  
COMMITTEE · CHAIR SEN. MICHELLE N. KIDANI

**POSITION:** Support.

**RATIONALE:** The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus supports HB 2511, HD1, relating to charter schools, which provides funding for the rental or lease of facilities through legislative appropriations and bond authorizations to the State Public Charter School Commission for the design, planning, construction, repair, and maintenance of public charter school improvements.

Public charter schools serve as sources of scholastic innovation. While many charter schools operate in urban areas, others meet the academic needs of remote areas lacking comprehensive public school facilities and programming. Additionally, many charter schools provide immersive instruction in Native Hawaiian culture and language.

Yet, charter schools receive inadequate funding to support student learning. While traditional DOE schools receive \$14,322 per-pupil each year, charter schools receive roughly \$7,500 per-pupil, out of which must be paid operational costs including curricula, salaries, and school supplies, leaving little for facilities, maintenance, and rent. Although the Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission may request facilities funding as part of its annual budget request, amounts received in recent fiscal years have not satisfied the rising cost of providing and maintaining quality

facilities. In turn, charter schools that lack adequate building space are forced to conduct class outdoors, on covered lanais, or in unsafe provisional structures.

To compensate for insufficient facilities funding, charter schools often seek revenue from nongovernmental, nonprofit, and corporate entities. While all charter schools in Hawai'i are required to operate as public schools, forcing charter schools to rely on nongovernmental funding sources increases private involvement in charter school programming, which undermines public accountability of the state's charter school network.

Furthermore, reliance on private funding by public charter schools could generate efforts to establish private charter schools and private charter school authorizers in Hawai'i, which would transfer control of public education to private entities and erode available resources for traditional public schools. To maintain the public status of charter schools, then, lawmakers should appropriate no less than \$10 million to HSPCSC to allocate based on need and financial performance.

**HB-2511-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2020 10:14:07 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2020 3:15:00 PM

**LATE**

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kathleen Algire	Testifying for Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!	Support	No

Comments:

**HB-2511-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2020 1:44:56 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2020 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Manuwai Peters	Testifying for Kanaeokana	Support	Yes

Comments:

**March 13, 2020****RE: HB2511 RELATING TO CHARTER SCHOOLS FACILITIES FUNDING**

**Aloha Representatives Woodson, Creagan, Decoite, Eli, Hashem, Hashimoto, Ichiyama, Kitagawa, B. Kobayashi, C. Lee, Mckelvey, Mizuno, Morikawa, Nakashima, Ohno, Quinlan, Takumi, and Ward:**

**Mahalo for hearing HB 2511- this is a critical funding mechanism to support facilities lease rents and maintenance costs for our public charter schools.**

**Kanaeokana supports HB2511. Kanaeokana, the Kula Hawai'i Network includes membership of all 17 Hawaiian Focused Charter Schools (HFCS), DOE Hawaiian Immersion/Medium Education schools, and over 60 other Hawaiian education organizations. HB 2511 is a first step to move public education forward but what is truly needed here is a mechanism to support capital improvement for charters.**

**The Kanaeokana membership has consistently advocated for the State of Hawai'i to provide a mechanism to support the facilities costs that charters bear by using their per pupil allocations. Kanaeokana is bringing together charter school principals and professionals in the planning industries to create a process that will allow schools to tap into efficiencies that designing to scale can capture. This can result in a savings of time and money for the State of Hawai'i.**

**As publicly funded schools that operate to meet the learning needs of our keiki, we ask the committee to advance this bill.**

**Me Ka 'Oia'i'o,**

**Charlene Hoe**

**Mahinapoepoe Paishon Duarte**

**KĀ• mike Advocacy & HĀ• Iau OIĀ• Io**

**Kanaeokana, the Kula Hawai'i Network**

**advocacy@kanaeokana.net**

## Testimony in FULL SUPPORT of HB2511

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Mercado Kim, and members of the Senate Committee on Education,

I am writing to express my FULL SUPPORT of HB2511 with one critical comment. This bill would provide funding to charter schools for facilities improvements as well as for infrastructure costs, and lease and rental assistance.

As you are aware, charter schools are public schools and serve over 11,500 students in 37 schools statewide. At present, charter schools are not allocated a facility for use and must pay any facilities expenses out of their per-pupil allocation. This bill would ease the burden of infrastructure and facilities expenditures, which other conventional public schools do not bear, and allow charter schools to be able to use their FULL student allocations as they should--to provide quality educational resources, curriculum, and instruction for their students. This bill will allow charter schools to more effectively fulfill their educational purposes.

My critical comment is that **this bill take effect in July 2020**, not 7/1/2050, as stated on the Hawai'i State Legislature website.

[https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/measure\\_indiv.aspx?billtype=HB&billnumber=2511&year=2020&utm\\_source=SEEQS+Updates&utm\\_campaign=fb0292f762-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2016\\_12\\_23\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_2cfb730eda-fb0292f762-](https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/measure_indiv.aspx?billtype=HB&billnumber=2511&year=2020&utm_source=SEEQS+Updates&utm_campaign=fb0292f762-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2016_12_23_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_2cfb730eda-fb0292f762-)

My son Luke is a 6th grade student at SEEQS, a public charter middle school housed in Kaimuki High School. I am a single parent and when Luke started at SEEQS, we were living in Kailua and I was teaching in Kāne'ohe. I drove into town and back to Ko'olaupoko, an hour and a half to 2 hour round trip, twice a day. Each morning family friends provided before-school care for him. Once a week when I traveled to neighbor islands his dad kept him overnight and dropped him off and picked him up from school. We worked together to have him at SEEQS because SEEQS provides a quality educational experience that is aligned with our family values and Luke's approach to learning.

Our experience as a charter school family confirms my belief that charter schools are a valuable and necessary part of the Hawai'i public school system. They increase access to diverse educational options for ALL Hawai'i families. SEEQS specifically provides educational experiences that engage students in the application of discrete subject area content in meaningful, real-world projects. Making connections and seeing relationships between themselves, their class content, and their projects not only reinforces academic learning but more importantly, fosters students' capacity to effectively express their agency as change-makers.

This educational approach is not common in conventional public schools but it is what my son and our 'ohana needs. Similarly, 'ohana who enroll their keiki in Hawaiian medium or Hawaiian immersion programs, want their keiki to grow up in learning environments that support and reinforce their 'ohana's 'ōiwi perspectives and values.

Mahalo for reading and considering my mana'o. Please support our keiki but increasing your financial support of our charter schools in this most meaningful way.

Mahalo,  
Kathi Takakuwa  
Kāne'ohe, Hawai'i

Senate Committee on Education  
March 16, 2020, 3:15 pm  
Room 229  
(Testimony is 1 page long)

TESTIMONY IN **STRONG SUPPORT** OF HB 2511 HD

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and Committee Members,

I am writing to ask that you pass HB 2511, which calls for sensibly investing in education by helping Hawai'i's charter schools solve the problem of facilities insecurity. This investment in our children is **impactful, necessary, and urgent**.

As the father of a six-year old and former science teacher, I know the enormous value of education for Hawai'i's families. For this reason, since 2013 I have volunteered to support the School for Examining Essential Questions of Sustainability: SEEQS.

SEEQS is a public charter middle school in urban Honolulu. Its innovative educational approach is rooted in **community-based values, rigorous content, and project-based learning**. **As a part of Hawai'i's public school system, it is open to all families**. SEEQS students perform well on Hawai'i State Assessments. For three years in a row, a SEEQS teacher was named District Teacher of the Year by the Department of Education. Unsurprisingly, demand for the SEEQS curriculum is high. Applications from regularly exceed the number of available spots.

Although SEEQS has succeeded in supporting Hawai'i's public school system by boosting diverse educational opportunities open to all families, **facilities insecurity is an ever-present challenge**. I have observed the school's dynamic educators work tirelessly to find and create a home for their students to learn. In a place like urban Honolulu, where space is short, this is an especially pressing challenge. For the past several years, SEEQS has successfully partnered with Kaimuki High School. But even the future of this forward-thinking partnership is uncertain. In the meanwhile, SEEQS students and teachers are thriving while occupying tents rather than permanent classrooms.

This bill can help to solve this facilities insecurity for schools like SEEQS, and will support beneficial learning environments for over 11,500 students currently served by the public charter school system in Hawai'i.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify. Although I serve as the volunteer President of the Board of Directors for the SEEQS Foundation, this testimony is submitted in my personal capacity rather than any official capacity.

Richard Wallsgrove



**HB-2511-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2020 3:01:26 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2020 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Christina Higa	Individual	Support	No

## Comments:

As a parent of a child who attends SEEQS (the School for Examining Essential Questions of Sustainability) charter school, I strongly support HB 2511 relating to facilities funding, infrastructure and appropriations for charter schools. I testify that SEEQS provides innovative, evidence and researched-based curriculum that inspires and engages student learning. SEEQS leadership and entire team are committed to providing an excellent educational opportunity for our children and have a strong track record of doing so. However, the lack of funding for facilities is a major distraction and constant burden. Currently, charter schools must cover facility costs as part of the approximately \$7,500 per-pupil allocation detracting from educational resources and academic support of these students. This bill introduces the very much needed equitable support for the 11,500 children in the State of Hawaii attending charter schools. Thank you in advance for recognizing this as a very important matter for our communities, families and children in Hawaii.

**LATE**

**HB-2511-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/16/2020 7:35:38 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2020 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Dawn Poiani	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support HB2511,

The most powerful testimony will reference your own personal experience with SEEQS or other charter schools, but these talking points may help:

- Charter schools deserve our support because all public school children deserve equal opportunities.
- Charter schools are public schools and serve over 11,500 students in 37 schools statewide.
- Charter schools are not allocated a facility for use and must pay any facilities expenses out of per-pupil allocations (~\$7,500), limiting their ability to provide other educational resources.
- Charter schools are a valuable and necessary part of the public school system.
- Charter schools increase access to diverse educational options for all Hawai'i families. This includes curricula grounded in innovative, forward-looking practices or closely-held values.

**LATE**

**HB-2511-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2020 3:33:48 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2020 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Lena Seow	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Charter schools deserve our support because...

- Charter schools are public schools and serve over 11,500 students in 37 schoolsstatewide.
- Charter schools are not allocated a facility for use and must pay any facilities expenses out of per-pupil allocations (~\$7,500), limiting their ability to provide other educational resources.
- Charter schools are a valuable and necessary part of the public school system.
- Charter schools increase access to diverse educational options for all Hawai'i families. This includes curricula grounded in innovative, forward-looking practices or closely-held values.

**LATE**

**HB-2511-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2020 5:02:15 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2020 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Ben Trevino	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

**Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and members of the Committee:**

**I am writing to STRONGLY SUPPORT HB 2511, which provides necessary assistance to charter schools and the many Hawai'i families that depend on them.**

I have served on the SEEQS Foundation Board for several years and worked with the school through at least one move.

In that time I've watched the school leadership and staff work through every challenge thrown their way. I've seen students thrive brilliantly in the SEEQS educational model. I've seen person after person learn about SEEQS and be completely inspired and blown away. I've been a part of SEEQS mapping out a broad vision for impact and growth with unlike any I've ever seen in both its rigor and aspiration.

And there has been only one problem that seems to continually present this educational community with an existential threat: facilities.

Through its charter school legislation, the State of Hawaii has created space for educational innovation and for serving students in a dynamic and changing world. By addressing the showstopping facilities gap, HB2511 carries out the promise that the original legislation makes to the state and specifically to its young students.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify

Ben Trevino