

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



MAKALAPUA ALENCASTRE, ED. D.
CHAIRPERSON

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

<http://CharterCommission.Hawaii.Gov>
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1100, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Tel: (808) 586-3775 Fax: (808) 586-3776

FOR: SCR 203/SR 191 URGING THIS BODY TO ESTABLISH A PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL WORKING GROUP TO EXAMINE THE SUPPORT SYSTEMS AVAILABLE TO STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS AND DETERMINE WHETHER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CENTRALIZED PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL DISTRICT OR SIMILAR SERVICE COOPERATIVE WOULD PROVIDE IMPROVED SUPPORT TO PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

DATE: April 6, 2026

TIME: 1:00 P.M.

COMMITTEE: Committee on Education

ROOM: Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

FROM: Ed H. Noh, Ed. D., Executive Director
State Public Charter School Commission

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

The State Public Charter School Commission ("Commission") appreciates the opportunity to offer testimony in **SUPPORT OF THE INTENT of SCR 203/SR 191**, which:

1. Establishes a Public Charter School Working Group to examine support systems available to state public charter schools and determine whether the establishment of a centralized public charter school district or similar service cooperative would provide improved support to public charter schools;
2. Requests the Hawaii Public Charter Schools Network to convene and lead the Public Charter School Working Group; and
3. Provides the membership of the Working Group.

The Commission appreciates that this resolution is intended to determine what supports are needed by charter schools and how to implement and establish these support structures. The Commission is prepared to work with the Hawaii Public Charter Schools Network and the Working Group on the items identified in and requested by this resolution.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.



**Testimony in Strong Support of
SR 191/SCR 203
Urging the Establishment of a Public
Charter School Working Group**

*EDU on Monday, 04-06-26 1:00PM
in Conference Room 229*

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

We are writing to express our strong support for SR 191/SCR 203, which propose the establishment of a Public Charter School Working Group to examine our state's charter school support systems. As we serve thousands of students through innovative, community-driven models, we continue to face systemic operational hurdles (from facilities maintenance to human resources) that distract us from our core educational missions. This resolution is a historic first step toward determining whether a centralized charter district or service cooperative can provide the coordinated administrative relief we have long needed.

A critical reason to support this measure now is the significant potential for federal grant awards to fund both the Working Group's efforts and the individual schools that stand to benefit from a more robust state structure. Under the leadership of the Hawaii Public Charter Schools Network (HPCSN), our community can better leverage the Federal Charter Schools Program (CSP), which allocates substantial funds for high-quality charter systems. While many of these grant portals may currently appear "closed," they follow recurring annual cycles that we must be structurally prepared to enter.

Existing charter schools stand to gain significant operational and financial advantages by leveraging federal funding through the proposed centralized district or cooperative structure. By establishing this administrative infrastructure, we can better assist our schools in navigating the complex requirements for Charter Management Organization (CMO) Grants and State Entity Subgrants, which provide the capital necessary for high-quality schools to grow. These funds can be used to significantly increase student enrollment, add new grade levels, or even open additional campuses based on proven educational models.

One of our most persistent hurdles (facility costs) can be addressed through federal programs like the Credit Enhancement for Charter School Facilities Program, which helps schools secure private-sector loans at lower interest rates for buying, building, or renovating campuses. Additionally, schools in our more rural communities can access the USDA Community Facilities

Program for low-interest loans and grants for essential infrastructure, while other federal funds can be directed toward necessary building renovations and minor repairs.

Beyond physical infrastructure, federal grants provide vital resources for professional development and instructional innovation. Our schools can receive support for staff training, workshops, and the development of new curriculum materials. If one of our schools develops a unique best practice (such as a successful Native Hawaiian educational model) we can apply for National Dissemination Grants to fund the sharing of that expertise with educators state and nationwide.

Finally, a centralized district allows us to pool resources to provide services that are often too expensive for a single school to manage independently. We could use grant funds to hire specialized instructional support personnel or other needed educators to serve multiple schools, and cover one-time startup costs for student transportation or essential classroom technology and laboratory equipment.

The success of our schools depends on this collective action. We urge the Committee to pass SR 191 and SCR 203 to ensure that we can finally build the professional, supported, and federally funded future our educators, students, and their families deserve.

Mahalo for your leadership and for the opportunity to testify.



**Testimony in Strong Support of
SR 191/SCR 203
Urging the Establishment of a Public
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Mahalo for your leadership and for the opportunity to testify.



info@hawaiikidscan.org
hawaiikidscan.org

April 3, 2026

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

Regarding: **Support for SCR203 / SR191**

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

HawaiiKidsCAN supports the intent of SCR203 & SR191, which propose convening a working group to examine the operational and administrative challenges facing public charter schools and to evaluate potential approaches to better support these schools.

Founded in 2017, HawaiiKidsCAN is a local nonprofit organization committed to ensuring that all students in Hawaii have access to excellent educational opportunities, regardless of family income levels or circumstances.

Public charter schools play an important role in serving diverse communities across our state, and many face ongoing operational challenges that warrant thoughtful review. Creating space for stakeholders to share perspectives and examine these issues can help inform a more complete understanding of current needs.

We support continued dialogue, study, and careful consideration of potential approaches before any significant structural changes are pursued.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Erica Nakanishi-Stanis
Advocacy Director
HawaiiKidsCAN

SR-191

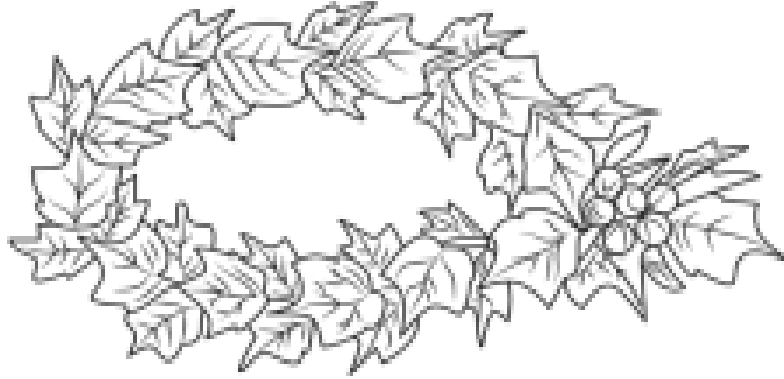
Submitted on: 4/4/2026 4:09:51 PM

Testimony for EDU on 4/6/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Terri York	Testifying for Hawaii Academy of Arts & Science PCS	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We strongly support SR 191/SCR 203



‘A‘ohe pau ka ‘ike i ka hālanu ho‘okahi
Connections Public Charter School
A Community, Business & Education Learning ‘Ohana

TO: The Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Damon Murphy, Director, Connections Public Charter School

DATE: April 6, 2026

RE: Testimony in Strong Support of **SR 191** and **SCR 203** – Urging the Establishment of a Public Charter School Working Group

Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express my firm support for **SR 191** and its companion measure **SCR 203**. These resolutions represent a critical opportunity to modernize the support structures for Hawaii’s public charter schools. As a school director on the front lines, I deal daily with persistent operational challenges in facilities, transportation, and specialized services that pull our focus away from our students. I believe the establishment of this Working Group is the essential first step toward a more sustainable and equitable future for our schools.

In seeking a successful model for this transformation, I urge the Working Group to look closely at the **NOLA Public Schools (NOLA-PS)** system in New Orleans. The documentary film *Turnaround*, released by David Osborne, provides a powerful and inspiring glimpse into what our charter schools could soon look like. The film chronicles how New Orleans reinvented a struggling, bureaucratic system by moving toward a model of autonomous schools supported by a centralized administrative framework. By separating school authorization from operational support—a key goal of **SR 191** and **SCR 203**—NOLA-PS has allowed educators to focus on diverse learning models while a central district manages the "back-office" complexities.

As the schools featured in *Turnaround*, our Hawaii charter schools serve diverse and often underserved communities that deserve a system capable of meeting their specific needs. Adopting a centralized district or service cooperative model could also unlock significant **federal grant awards**, including **CSP State Entities Grants** and **State Facilities Incentive Grants**, which are currently difficult for us to access without a unified administrative structure. These resources would empower our individual schools to expand their impact, renovate their facilities, and focus entirely on student achievement.

As *Turnaround* demonstrates, when we replace heavy-handed bureaucracy with a system of accountability and support, students thrive. I urge the Committee to pass **SR 191** and **SCR 203** and allow us to begin building a future where Hawaii is the next model of excellence that other states seek to emulate.

Mahalo

Damon L. Murphy
Director
Connections PCS
808-896-4875

SR-191

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 7:42:55 PM

Testimony for EDU on 4/6/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marissa Leimakanalani Ornellas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha kākou,

I am writing in support of Senate Resolution 191 and Senate Concurrent Resolution 203 which establishes a Public Charter School Working Group in order to evaluate the feasibility of a centralized public charter school district or a statewide service cooperative.

I greatly mahalo your careful consideration of this resolution which offers a momentous opportunity to reshape the operational landscape for our Public Charter Schools. As you may know, each Public Charter School in Hawai‘i expends a significant amount of time, energy and limited resources in ensuring the operations of their school. This is a contrasting situation in Department of Education Schools, which leverage the operational burden through centralized operational systems. These systemic "back-office" hurdles faced by Hawai‘i’s Public Charter Schools (facilities acquisition, transportation procurement, food services compliance, etc.) often distract us from our educational visions and missions. Let’s give the Working Group an opportunity to see what it proposes.

E kāko‘o nō i ka SR 191 me ka SCR 203 - please support SR 191 and SCR 203.

Me ka mahalo,

Marissa Leimakanalani Ornellas

Governing Board Chari and parent at Kawaikini NCPCS, Kaua‘i

Aloha kākou,

I am writing in support of Senate Resolution 191 and Senate Concurrent Resolution 203 which establishes a Public Charter School Working Group in order to evaluate the feasibility of a centralized public charter school district or a statewide service cooperative.

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E kāko‘o nō i ka SR 191 me ka SCR 203 - please support SR 191 and SCR 203.

Me ka mahalo,

(Inoa)

Public Charter School Parent at Kawaikini NCPCS, Kaua‘i

SR-191

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 3:36:33 PM

Testimony for EDU on 4/6/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ashley Medeiros	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

RE: Support for SR191 – Charter School Support Systems Working Group

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ashley Medeiros, and I am a resident of Kaua‘i, a registered nurse, and a parent of a child in a Hawaiian immersion educational setting.

I am writing in strong support of SR191 and its effort to explore better support systems for Hawai‘i’s public charter schools.

From both my professional and personal experience, I understand what happens when systems lack adequate support. As a nurse, I see how burnout and strain affect the quality of care when staff are expected to do too much without enough infrastructure. I see similar patterns in our schools.

On Kaua‘i, charter schools such as Kawaikini Public Charter School provide deeply meaningful, culturally grounded education that cannot be replicated elsewhere. These schools are essential for preserving ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, strengthening identity, and building community connection for our keiki.

However, these same schools often operate with limited administrative and operational support. Teachers and staff are stretched thin, balancing education with responsibilities such as compliance, logistics, and program management.

As a parent on Kaua‘i, I experience firsthand the challenges families face with transportation and access. At our school, there have been multiple instances throughout the year where bus service disruptions or breakdowns require parents to scramble to get their children to school or arrange for early pickup. These situations place real strain on working families and can directly impact a child’s ability to fully participate in their education, especially for those who live farther away.

I support the exploration of centralized support services in areas like human resources, facilities, transportation, and compliance. Strengthening these systems could significantly improve sustainability and allow educators to focus on teaching and supporting students.

At the same time, I respectfully ask that the working group prioritize:

- Strong and meaningful representation from Kaua‘i and other neighbor islands
- Inclusion of Native Hawaiian charter school leaders and communities
- Protection of each school’s autonomy, cultural practices, and place-based approach

It is critical that any centralized system supports schools without diminishing what makes them unique and effective.

My child thrives in a culturally grounded environment, and I want to ensure that these opportunities are strengthened, not standardized in ways that disconnect them from community and culture.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your commitment to supporting Hawai‘i’s keiki and educators.

Respectfully,
Ashley Medeiros

SR-191

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 5:58:04 PM

Testimony for EDU on 4/6/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Roxanne Carvalho	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha kākou,

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E kāko‘o nō i ka SR 191 me ka SCR 203 - please support SR 191 and SCR 203.

Me ka mahalo,

Roxanne Carvalho

Public Charter School Parent at Kawaikini NCPCS, Kaua‘i

SR-191

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 5:59:42 PM

Testimony for EDU on 4/6/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aaron Carvalho	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha kākou,

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E kāko‘o nō i ka SR 191 me ka SCR 203 - please support SR 191 and SCR 203.

Me ka mahalo,

Aaron Carvalho

Public Charter School Parent at Kawaikini NCPCS, Kaua‘i

SR-191

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 9:17:36 PM

Testimony for EDU on 4/6/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

191 SR URGING THIS BODY TO ESTABLISH A PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL WORKING GROUP TO EXAMINE THE SUPPORT SYSTEMS AVAILABLE TO STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS AND DETERMINE WHETHER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CENTRALIZED PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL DISTRICT OR SIMILAR SERVICE COOPERATIVE WOULD PROVIDE IMPROVED SUPPORT TO PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS.

SR-191

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 8:48:05 AM

Testimony for EDU on 4/6/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tiana Laranio	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this for the support of our keiki. Mahalo