



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Education
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by
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SB 2586 – RELATING TO EDUCATION

Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Harimoto, and members of the Senate Committee on Education, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 2586.

The College of Education at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UH) supports the intent of SB 2586 and the comprehensive nature of the reforms proposed. We respectfully suggest preserving this list by keeping this omnibus bill alive throughout the session to provide all stakeholders the opportunity to better understand, analyze and suggest appropriate amendments to each section.

Specific section comments on PART II. (Also SB 2587, and Part XIV and SB 2598)

UH strongly supports whole student education, including that of the arts, vocational education, physical education, and other elements of importance but not yet mandated by the Board of Education. Many schools have, within their budgets and within the instructional and learning day schedules, incorporated many of these elements. The University Laboratory School, a charter school operated in collaboration with the College for example, has for many decades provided a comprehensive arts program and a requirement that all students participate in a performance music ensemble. We note also that the Hawai'i Educational Policy Center (HEPC) has prepared a short brief on the value of arts education that has been provided to you. Part XIV and SB 2598 complements this policy with funds to hire more teachers in these areas. However, we recognize there may be reluctance for the Legislature to mandate a specific number of hours of instruction.

Specific section comments on Part III. (See SB 2588)

We support Part III. UH recognizes the significant challenges in providing Free and Appropriate Education for Special Education students, as well as the difficulty in recruiting future SPED teachers.

Specific section comments on Part IV. (See SB 2589)

UH supports funding for vocational educational and technical training. This is particularly important given Hawai'i's interest in promoting and supporting STEM education. To date, so much of STEM instruction has been channeled into robotics and other activities after school, which has a limited capacity to reach a larger number of students.

Specific section comments on Part V. (See SB 2590)

UH supports efforts to create a physical environment more conducive to student attention and

learning. What has been missing is a standard for heat abatement similar to OSHA standards for employees. We suggest an effort that includes health professionals, as well as consideration of proper hydration for students during particular hotter days. Dehydration can render both adults and students unable to concentrate.

Specific section comments on Part VI. (SB 2591)

UH sees value in involving school community councils (SCC) in more meaningful decisions. The SCCs represent stakeholders not part of the formal HODOE hierarchy that better ensure community engagement whereby all interested parties and perspectives contribute to good decision making. UH notes that the Board of Education has created a Permitted Interaction Group to evaluate the current status of SCCs throughout the system.

Specific section comments on Part VII. (SB 2592)

We agree with the perspective that there has been too great an emphasis on high stakes testing at the expense of more meaningful learning opportunities. Should there be a process established to further examine this issue, UH notes that the Curriculum Research and Development Group (CRDG) along with faculty in other units have expertise in developing effective assessments. CRDG could, with appropriate resources, assist in developing more meaningful assessments.

Specific section comments on Part VIII. (SB 2598)

UH agrees that teachers should not be pressured to use personal funds to ensure that students have adequate supplies.

Specific section comments on Part IX. (SB 2594)

UH has considerable experience with student loans and scholarships specific to supporting teacher preparation. Various efforts at providing such incentives have been implemented in the past with funding from the Legislature, for example, in support of Hawai'i Association for Future Teachers (HAFT), an effort that enjoyed some success, but no longer receives funding. A partnership with the Hawai'i Department of Education providing funding support to prepare more special education teachers has been successful in recruiting and preparing individuals for the persistent hard-to-fill field. We note that student loan incentives have had limited success. Of considerable concern is the added expense and administration necessary to track recipients and when necessary recapture funds due to recipient not meeting their obligations regarding number of years of service.

Specific section comments on Part X. (SB 2595)

UH has always been a strong supporter of early education. We have long anticipated the State commitment to improving early learning opportunities for our children and within the College we have shifted internal resources to be ready to meet the increase in workforce demands. We have increased the number of our tenure track faculty with expertise in early childhood education, building capacity to better prepare teachers who are ready to provide age-appropriate early childhood education. We have created new programs to prepare early learning teachers and leaders. Anything that moves this agenda forward would be a positive move.

Specific section comments on Part XI. (SB 2596)

We wish to point out that the College of Education has specific processes for evaluating the preparation of teacher candidates. At present we are working to better align assessments of

teachers in preparation with how graduates will be assessed on the job. The UH through the Teacher Education Coordinating Committee (TECC) is in frequent communication with the Department of Education on this issue.

Specific section comments on Part XII. (SB 2597)

UH notes that the sizes of individual schools can also be problematic. A study several years ago by the Hawai'i Educational Policy Center found that the average size of Hawai'i's schools at all levels was often twice the size of comparable mainland schools. For some students and communities, this can create barriers to meaningful engagement with the learning community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.